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“One girl priced everything at our counter.”

A CANDID CRITIC

And Other Stories For Girls

BY

MAUDE RITTENHOUSE MAYNE

Illustrated by Chapin

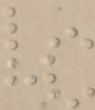


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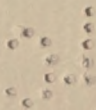


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Lovingly Dedicated

*TO THE DEAREST OF FRIENDS, THE
CHEERIEST OF COMRADES, THE
WISEST OF COUNSELORS, MY
BRAVE, SWEET, HELPFUL*

Mother

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I

A CANDID CRITIC

“**I**’M not one of the sort to talk behind the back,” remarked Sibyl Carey with an air of self-righteousness, “and I’m never afraid to tell the truth.”

“Pity you aren’t now and then,” replied Rob Snell with a laugh, “for the truth isn’t always a very kind or palatable dose to force down people’s throats. I fancy Ethel thought it a rather bitter pill to swallow just now.”

“She will cry her eyes out,” murmured Matie, remembering Ethel’s flushed face as she had left the room.

“I don’t care ; it will do her good. She hasn’t enough backbone to class her among vertebrates, and she needed to know it.”

“But you might have told her more gently. She is very sensitive.”

Sibyl sniffed disdainfully. “Truth is truth. It will not hurt her. I feel perfectly friendly toward Ethel and my criticism is honest.”

"Let me see," said Rob with a twinkle, "aren't you the honest party who told Laura Larcom she never ought to try to sing again in public?"

"Yes," answered Sibyl, "and a good thing it was too. She is sure to fail every time—silly, frightened thing!"



"A good way to reassure her and give her self-confidence," exclaimed Rob. "Well, come again, Miss Honest Candor. I suppose we all need dressing

down occasionally—those of us who are only human." And Rob bowed low as he held the door for Sibyl to pass out.

"For my part," said Matie with some warmth, as the door closed, "I think Sibyl decidedly too critical. She never loses a chance to say a disagreeable thing and then to refer to her own exemplary frankness."

"You are talking behind her back," said Mary Washburn smiling.

"One of us ought to follow her example and tell her what a prickly she is getting to be; she is so fond of the truth!"

"I just wish you would do it," exclaimed Rob. "I'd like to help. I have never forgotten how she hurt Jessie St. John by telling her she was no lady because she laughed aloud in a street car once. You know what a jolly, bright little thing Jessie is, and a thorough little lady too. It cut her to the heart."

"Sibyl certainly needs a lesson," assented Matie. "Now, girls, put up your work and we'll have our chocolate. Stay, Rob; a boy is a novelty in our sewing club."

"Indeed I will; I'm so interested in Sibyl's case. Don't drop the thing. She ought to be pricked with one of her own thorns and I will help."

"I am not thirsting for gore," said gay little Rose Sawyer, "even if she did discover and publicly announce that my best gown was made over out of grandma's; but I do believe it would be a good thing, Rob, to let Miss Sibyl see herself as others see her just for once. She is worse than a whole swarm of gnats turned loose upon the community. Nobody escapes her stinging."

"She would be lovely but for that," said Sue Lawrence gravely. "She is so capable and energetic "

"Will you be a martyr for your country's good and help reform her too?"

"If you'll not keep it up too long," answered Sue.

By the time the girls had sipped their chocolate, eaten the crisp wafers, and folded up their work, the plan was complete.

"Remember," called Rob, departing, "the sewing club is now the Club of Candid Critics. Don't be slow getting in your work."

And they were not.

Matie met Sibyl the next day on the walk and stopped for a moment's chat. "Why, Sibyl, you poor thing!" she exclaimed presently, her heart quaking a little. "How dreadfully freckled you are this spring. You really ought to be more careful of your skin; you're getting to look like a fright." Then, as she hurried off, "Do try lemon juice and a veil."

Sibyl stood staring in angry amazement.

"Don't you know it's unladylike to stand chatting on a street corner?" said a voice in her ear. And she turned to see Rob Snell stepping toward her. "I'll walk on with you a bit," he continued loftily. "To tell the truth, I've been

wanting to speak to you, Sibyl. This isn't the first remissness I have noticed in your conduct of late. I was really ashamed of you the day of the Knights' Parade. The way you jostled and pushed through the crowd with no regard for other people's rights! And the boisterous way in which you clapped the soprano at the Schumann Concert was downright rude. When I heard you correcting Ethel yesterday, I realized that I too had Christian duties as a critic. Good-bye. I turn here."

"Of all the impudence!" exclaimed Sibyl, her eyes flashing. "Christian duties, indeed! I always did hate Rob Snell. What a prig he is!" And Sibyl went home in no mild temper.

She had hardly recovered her usual self-complacency when she went next day to a class recital at her music teacher's. She was sitting in a sunny window when Mary Washburn exclaimed suddenly: "Gracious! but your hair is fiery red, Sibyl, isn't it? It fairly flames in that sunshine!"

Sibyl's face flamed also. "You are rather blunt," she said.

"Oh, only candid," replied Mary.

"And speaking candidly," interrupted Sue Lawrence, "I wish you would just tell me frankly why on earth you ever tried to write

that poem for the alumni banquet. You are no poet, Sibyl, and that fact was painfully apparent. I have been feeling that some courageous and outspoken friend of yours ought to tell you never to try such a thing again, and I am glad I am not afraid to tell you the truth about it."

Then Madame Fisher announced the first number on the programme, and Sibyl could not have replied even had she found words. She was so choked with indignation she could hardly sing when called upon, and even "that silly, frightened Laura Larcom" she knew far surpassed her in the all too evident estimation of the small audience. She felt crushed and humiliated as she left madam's door and slipped off alone.

"Sibyl," called Rose ringingly, "for goodness' sake straighten up! You walk like a perfect dowdy."

That was the last straw. "Will you just keep your opinions to yourself, please," Sibyl cried wrathfully.

"But it's the truth," persisted Rose, "and you ought to be told it. The truth can't hurt you. If you want to be classed among vertebrates, walk as if you had a backbone."

But Sibyl could bear no more. Her lips quivered and tears rushed to her eyes.

"Forgive us, Sibyl dear," begged Rose instantly, as she and Matie hurried to her. "It was mean as could be, but our new club, 'The Candid Critics,' knowing your belief in outspoken criticism——"

Suddenly, angry and heartsore as she was, Sibyl burst into a half-hysterical laugh. There was something irresistibly funny about it, after all.

"How many of you are in it?" she asked, as the light began to grow clearer to her. "Is Bob Snell?"

"Yes."

"And Mary and Sue?"

"Yes."

"Well, you have been merciless, but I forgive you. I am glad you thought me worth saving. I have certainly figured for the last time as a 'candid critic.' I can't join your club."

"Then we'll dissolve it," declared Matie gayly. "We are no fonder of it than you are."

"Hurrah for you, Sibyl!" exclaimed Sue, coming up. "I think we have all discovered that when we take our lashings, we want a little balm at the same time."

"In other words, we'll look for something to commend as well as something to denounce, and give tender counsel instead of sharp rebuke,"

said Sibyl slowly, more to herself than to the others. And then this reformed critic added with a rueful face: "It was mean, all of you at a time; but you are the dearest girls in the world, anyhow. Is that balm?"

II

ALICE GANNETT'S VACATION



CLIMB up, May—hurry! Now then! does it close yet, Kate?"

A shout of laughter, and Nell and May, red-faced and indig-

nant, gazed at Kate with a silent demand for the reason of her untimely mirth. Kate grew sober presently, though there were still bright tears in her eyes from the excess of her enjoyment.

"If you two could see how you look, perched on the top of that unhappy trunk, you'd come

off and laugh too. Close? Not much. Not by four inches. And until you take out that paint box, and your precious botany, and four or five dresses, it isn't going to close, Miss Nell, for all your positiveness about being able to pack a car-load or so of stuff into one unoffending trunk."

Nell and May sat digging their dainty heels into the gray canvas cover of the abused trunk, declaring that if the paint box and botany had to come out, Kate herself should have the fun of carrying them to the station, and up the hill at Woodlawn.

Woodlawn! There was magic in the name, and trunk and packing were forgotten as the three merry friends chattered over the prospect of six weeks spent in that delightful place.

"Papa never made so happy an investment as that, girls," said gleeful Nell. "A great big, cool house, orchards, vegetable gardens, horses, fresh air, flowers, vineyards, hammocks—oh, everything that is different from the stifling town! Mamma has asked just as many friends as the house can accommodate, to spend the time there with us, and oh, I am so glad that you can both go."

Kate, who sat in the broad, low window, suddenly exclaimed, "There goes Miss Gannett—

she's coming in!" and a click at the gate confirmed her statement.

"You needn't ring," called Nell. "Come across here into the cool, and I'll be maid and attend to you."

The face underneath the old gray turban smiled gratefully as Nell invited her in through the window.

"Come in; this is a new fashion, but you'll find it cooler inside; and here's a fan."

"Thank you, I can't stop; I must hurry home in time for my afternoon pupils. I wanted to leave this 'Mission Journal' for your mother. Please tell her she will find the statistics she was hunting for in this number. How cool you look, girls. Thank you, no, I have not time, for Willie Douglas comes at one, and it must be nearly that now. Good-bye."

For a few moments the girls silently watched the thin, gray figure hurrying off down the hot street.

"Giving to missions, and wearing in July a gray woollen gown that is four years old and as hot as—as—her fervor!"

"Teaching school from one year's end to another, with private pupils all through vacation, an old, fretful mother to support, and no recreation or rest."

"Living in a three-room cottage that is like an oven, and without a green thing in sight. Poor Miss Gannett!"

Then all three girls applied their fans with vigor, warm at the very thought of it all.

When presently Kate and May, arm in arm, departed for their respective homes, Nell, at the window, stared absently till the last vestige of their sun-umbrellas and light gingham had disappeared; then, with eyes fixed on vacancy, she dropped into a willow chair and sat like a lay-figure until a small sister rushed in to announce dinner.

"Didn't you hear the bell? What's the matter? You're the blankest looking thing! Come, hurry, we must all gobble to-day in spite of the physiologies, or we sha'n't be ready to leave to-morrow."

Nell's silence through the dinner hour passed unnoticed in the general clamor, but after that time the young lady walked with slow step to the airy room loved by the whole family of girls, because it was "mamma's room." Mrs. Drew and Nurse Braxon were busy mending and stowing away in packing cases the frocks and aprons and underwear of the four smaller girls.

"What has gone wrong? Have I given you too large a share of the getting ready to do?"

"Are you tired out?" Mrs. Drew asked anxiously, noting the cloud on the fair face of her eldest.

"No, indeed, you mother-bird. I have finished all you gave me to do, and am ready for more. But here's a magazine Alice Gannett left for you; those statistics are in it. Say, mamma, do you know that Miss Gannett hasn't had a vacation since I have known her? that she works everlastingly, lives in a bake-oven, wears hot clothes, and—oh, dear, dear!" and with a burst of tears Nellie Drew rushed from the room and down the stairs.

"What possesses the child? I never knew her to give way to an outburst like that," and little Mrs. Drew dropped a heap of pink and white apparel, and followed tearful Nell down the stairway and into the distant library. "Now, Helen, child, what is all this about? This will never do. Where there is trouble there is usually a way out of it."

To her surprise Nell looked up from the depths of her woe and her wet handkerchief with the brightest of smiles illuminating her face.

"There is a way out, and I'm so glad I wasn't too piggish to see it. Listen, you *mater*, and don't say a word. You've known me for fifteen happy years, and you never knew me to do a

thing for anybody else that was any sacrifice to myself, any real sacrifice, I mean. There never seemed to be any chance. Well, now there is a glorious chance if I manage properly, and you'll help me, I know. I am not going to Woodlawn to-morrow. I am going to be Alice Gannett, and let Alice Gannett be me. That isn't grammar, but it's right. She shall go as soon as she can get ready, have four weeks of rest and real enjoyment, while I stay here with her mother, and teach those small boys their 'readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic.' May I, oh! may I, mamma?"

Mrs. Drew looked at her brown-haired daughter a little oddly.

"Perhaps, Nellie, we might arrange, with a little crowding, to have Miss Gannett go without your staying. She might sleep with Clara, and then by putting a cot in Edie's room for——"

"But her mother? The old lady can't be left, and she can't be taken, for she has dizzy spells and doesn't dare ride on the cars. And mamma, if I could get her—old Mrs. Gannett, I mean—here into this house, I confess I'd enjoy it better, for I believe I should smother outright in that little snugger of theirs. You know you have arranged to keep this house open anyway. The pupils could come here too, you know; and surely if we should drive very slowly, and in

the cool of the evening, papa and I could get the old lady over here without making her any worse. Oh, do say yes, mamma! Think of the good it will do that tired-out woman; and when she comes back freshened and rested, I can rush up to Woodlawn and cram six weeks' good time into my remaining two weeks, and be just as happy as if I'd gone at first. Will you? May I, mamma?"

Mrs. Drew herself went with Nellie that evening to Alice Gannett's dingy little home. When the plan was unfolded the weary school-teacher's face changed from an expression of complete daze to greatest delight, and then to weary concern again.

"You are so very kind, I never can thank you enough; but I couldn't think of taking this pleasure by depriving Nellie of the good times she has looked forward to so long. She is tired too, for she has worked hard this year at school."

"Oh, I know I'm a terrific worker, while as to being tired——" Then with a sudden whisk she caught the little teacher and whirled her about before the diminutive mirror over her wash-stand. "There now, put your face close to mine, exercise your really fine judgment, and answer truthfully, which of us looks most in need of rest."

The picture in the glass was a striking one, the round, rosy cheeks, the soft, brown hair, and the laughing eyes of Nellie Drew in brilliant contrast with the pale, tired face of the thin little woman at her side. Miss Gannett could only smile in her turn, and gently pat the plump hand that held her in place before her own reflection.

"Well, I do look like rather a poor excuse for a woman," she said slowly.

"Yes, you do, if you'll forgive me for saying it. You look like the most untiring, devoted worker that ever lived, who, being after all but flesh and blood, has worn herself into an absolute wreck. A wreck! That's what you are. Now will you just tell me what reason or sense there is in your using yourself up like this? Is it kind to your pupils? You can't teach so well when your mental and physical powers are strained to the utmost. Is it kind to your mother? You'll soon be as great an invalid as she, and where will be the kindness then? Is it kind to me to deprive me of doing the one thing of all things I am most anxious to do? I tell you, I'm a spoiled child, Miss Gannett, and it doesn't do not to let me have my own way."

In the end she had it.

The short journey to Woodlawn was postponed

a day in order to arrange with Miss Gannett's pupils, move the old lady to Mrs. Drew's home, and make what few preparations Alice found necessary for her departure.

May and Kate, from being inconsolable at the thought of going without Nell, finally entered into the spirit of "the exchange," and went to work industriously, helping Miss Gannett make the single gingham dress in which she had indulged for her visit.

When the great hack and the little pony cart left the house, loaded promiscuously with satchels, packages, and happy people, Nellie stood on the front steps and waved them off merrily.

No four weeks ever seemed to her to fly as did the four that followed. To be sure, occasionally she wanted to shake some particularly provoking little boy out of his boots, and sometimes it was hard to bear the fault-finding of the childish old woman whose broth and gruel never seemed to be just right. But even the very dullest little boy had his good points, and the very worst whinings of the fretful invalid were as feather-weights upon her spirits when she could read the breezy letters that came daily from the girls at Woodlawn.

Soon the letters began to read like a romance.

Miss Gannett had gone the first Sunday to the little town church a mile away, looking very much improved by her few days of country air and living. She had taught a class in Sunday-school and helped with an afternoon mission concert in her own sweet, self-forgetting way.

This bit of news coming from Kate had a postscript from May :

Her evident influence over her class of burly farmer boys, and her gentle enthusiasm in meeting were not lost either on the big blonde minister who sat on a back seat and watched with interest the gray-gowned stranger within his gates.

Then came a loving letter from Mrs. Drew :

Rev. Mr. Goodall called this afternoon. It seems he has known Alice some place before. I don't understand it all ; but certainly she is the loveliest character I ever knew. I never half appreciated how much earnest Christian zeal lay under her quiet exterior.

Next from Edie :

I was in the hammick and heard them talking. He said it was all a mistake, and she cride and laffed at once and said she was old and set and had her mother. What do you gess they mean ?

Nell guessed a good deal, and felt somewhat mystified and wholly delighted. Meanwhile a greater surprise was being prepared at home. Something—whether it was change of house or air or gruel, Nell had no idea—something was improving old Mrs. Gannett. She asked to sit near the window, and wanted quilt-patches to cut, gaining from this occupation much evident enjoyment. Then she grew interested in some bright news of the day in “our advanced periodicals,” as Nell called them, and began to talk of them to the utter routing of the gruel question.

Often in the evenings, after the sun had gone down, and yet before the late twilight, Nell persuaded the little old soul to walk up and down across the lawn on the stone paving where there was no dew.

“I’m—I’m not so dizzy-headed. Isn’t it rather unusual, my dear, for a woman of my age to walk about like this?”

“Why, no, Mrs. Gannett. There was that dear old friend of mamma’s who visited us. She was—let me see—seven years older than you, and as brisk as a cricket. You aren’t an old woman. Pooh! I mean to be playing croquet and going visiting without my glasses when I’m no older than you.”

The bent old lady straightened up a bit and laughed, not unmusically, amused and rather pleased at the girl's cheery spirit.

"I'll keep it the very stillest secret," mused Nell to herself, "and strike them all dumb with amazement when they find how, in four short weeks, my invalid, feeble only because she thought she ought to be at her age, has been metamorphosed into a happy, helpful old lady."

Nor was it over-sanguine musing. When the four weeks were up and Alice Gannett came home looking ten years younger, she stopped in the doorway, her little hand-satchel falling with a click to the door-sill, for she couldn't believe her eyes when she saw Mother Gannett, smiling, cheery, a basket of quilt patches at her hand, rising to greet her, even coming forward to meet her!

Nell hugged them both with some feeling under the merry words: "You needn't have thought, Miss Alice, that you could come back looking so young and sweet and not find us young and sweet too. We've been girls together, Mother Gannett and I, haven't we?"

The old lady's thin lips quivered as she answered: "At least I have grown young enough to realize what a selfish, pampered old woman I have been. Alice, dear, generous daughter, with

the Lord's help, what life is left to me shall be, for your sake, a very different life."

"Didn't you hate to leave them in their cramped little home again?" asked Kate and May, when the three girls were again together exchanging confidences in one of the great, cool rooms in the Woodlawn home.

"Well, not so much, you know," Nell answered, with a comical drawl. "Why, you geese of girls, hadn't you eyes? I could see it when I wasn't here. Put your ears up close, and don't breathe it to a soul till I give you leave. Mr. Goodall—they were sweethearts long ago—parted somehow—Alice cried and I didn't ask particulars—but you know that pretty parsonage over the hill—long piazza, elm trees in front, don't you? Well, Alice and her mother will be domiciled there inside of a month; and though Alice had prepared him for the worst, any man might envy him his mother-in-law elect. He's a good man, and she's a grand good woman, and," with a quiver in her merry voice, "I thank God for that hot day when I sat howling at home, making up my mind to forget self for once in my life, and do a humble bit for him."

III

HOW JESSICA LEARNED

“**M**AY I walk in?” said good Frau Meyer brokenly; and Cornelia, lifting herself upon her elbow, said, “Yes,” trying to smile, and then fell back again, a disconsolate heap upon the narrow bed, crying as though her heart would break.

“Tut, tut! for how is this? I rub your back with my good grease. Or is it the feet?”

“Oh, it’s back and feet, and—everything!”

“In time you will get used to it.”

“Or die,” the girl said bitterly. “Why should I get used to it, Frau Meyer? What good will come of it in the end? Just enough bread and butter to keep cheerless body and soul together. And in the meantime I shall grow to despise human kind. Such arrogance, such self-absorption, such disregard for the feelings and comforts of others!”

“Ach, I thought!” broke in the elder woman

excitedly. "It was not so much back and feet, as heart. I know my stout-courage friend give up never so quick to ache of body. But ache of heart—that is different. Well, now, *liebchen*, tell it out. Was it the big, fat woman who says, 'Hustle up here and cut me twenty yards red vanity?' or was it the man of one lung and two livers who scold because his change come in silver, not bills."

Cornelia laughed in spite of herself at the droll, good-natured mimicry; and as the cheery, motherly soul began to rub her tired back briskly, she said with grateful penitence, "Dear Frau Meyer, I was a wicked sinner to fret you with these silly tears. I ought to be ashamed to complain when you are here to brace me up and comfort me just as any own mother might. But they are all alike; heartless, soulless, caring only for themselves and their pleasure. To-day it was really the last straw when one elegantly dressed girl priced everything at our counter, had me tear down and sort over goods until my arms tingled to my shoulders, asking, 'Will it fade?' 'How wide?' and paying no attention to my answers, until she finally went away without buying anything, and brought me a reprimand for not having sold to so patient and long-searching a customer. Do you blame

me for aching, Frau Meyer, when there are such things to be endured all day, and through many days to come? I try so hard to be quick and willing and careful, but it isn't easy, and I feel as if I must just cry it out here at night."

"And so is right, if it help you."

"It is you who help me, you dear," said the girl, sitting up at last on the edge of the bed, and patting the plump, red hand. "And if ever I am rich again, you shall have such caps and gowns and good times as will do your heart good. Surely, in the old days I was never like that careless girl who toyed with the silks at our counter to-day, and was too selfish or too indifferent to see——"

"Ach, now! You were gracious and sweet, I know, in that good time—and are now—too much to be judge for this other girl, who is better, maybe, than we know." And then as a jangling bell sounded in the hall, the good soul bustled off, calling back, "I send Minna to show you that stitch for your muff."

A moment later Cornelia, answering, "Come in," to a rap at her door, was startled to see, instead of Minna, a handsome figure in furs stepping airily into her little room.

"I've been reading about you poor shop-girls," said the figure blithely, "and when we girls gave

our last bazaar for the poor and the heathen, I just determined to use some of the funds for you."

A hot flush was rising to Cornelia's pale face, but her visitor, not seeing it, or supposing it to come from pleasure, continued patronizingly:

"I selected you this afternoon of all the ones I tested, because you didn't lose your temper the whole hour you waited on me. You see I wanted to be sure our charity was worthily bestowed, so I had myself made the committee to see to it, and I've put in the whole afternoon. Here is five dollars for you," and she thrust a bank-note into Cornelia's hand.

Cornelia, still standing, a bright spot glowing in either cheek, dropped the money as though it had burned her.

"I am not in need of charity," she said hotly, "excepting such charity as Christian people are supposed to bear each other. I find none of it in the girl who gives me an hour's unnecessary work that she may insult me afterward. Take your money. You never should have entered here had I known your errand."

When the door of that bare room banged forcibly shut, no one could have told which girl was the more angry, more ashamed—the one without or the one within.

"Charity! Charity!" Cornelia groaned. "Where was my own that I dared order her from my room?"

The figure in furs, hurrying down the darkening street, blinked two shining tears from her long brown lashes, and shook her head wrathfully as she did it. With swift-flying feet she sped through the narrow streets and into the broad avenue, to "go and tell Dell all about the horrid, stuck-up, insolent thing."

She burst in like a gale upon the two girls sitting in the glow of the firelight in Della's beautiful home.

"Dell! Sue! I've done it! And great good it did! I'll never pity poor shop-girls again; ungrateful things! She isn't nearly so tall as I, but she made me feel inches smaller, and she flung open her door like a queen to hurry me out. But let me tell you——" and drawing up a chair, and throwing back her heavy wrap, she recited graphically the whole story.

"Perhaps she didn't need it, anyhow," Sue ventured consolingly.

"Not need it? She was as shabby as a beggar, and her room was about as comfortable as our barn, and not half so well appointed. Here, Dell, you're treasurer. Take the money. I've had enough missionary work to last me a good

while. That piece of grandeur in twenty-cent mixed cotton has cured me of my sorrow for the indigent poor."

"The indignant poor, in this case," amended Sue, as the door closed upon Jessica's stylish figure.

Then she and Della looked at each other and laughed.

"Poor Jess! If one could only buy tact by the yard, what a dear girl she might become."

"Yet she doesn't realize and never will, I suppose, that she always rubs folks the wrong way and brings her troubles upon herself. Perhaps she's not to be blamed for lack of tact."

"I don't know, Sue. There is a kind of tact that comes simply from genuine kindness and sympathy. If Jessica had this—but I've no doubt she was patronizing to the last degree in this case, and any spirited girl would resent it. I, for one, am interested in this girl. Works at Black's at the silk counter, she said, and lives far out on Olive Street."

"Della!" Sue suddenly clutched her friend excitedly. "I wonder if this isn't that slender little blonde who comes to our church, wears gray, and always sits back near the door, on the right?"

"What makes you think so?"

"Why, I've been trying for a long time to think where I've seen that face, and I believe it was at Black's at that very counter. I will find out, anyway. And let's see if this twenty-cent girl who lives in a barn—was that what she said?—can't be helped in a better way. She looks like a bright, sweet, overworked girl, and I don't suppose her life is any too wildly happy."

By the following Sunday Sue had "settled for sure" the identity of the girl in gray with the girl at Black's; and Della, had she seen it, would have understood why Sue was late at church that day and had to sit far back just behind the "impudent shop-girl," who looked modest and humble enough in her quiet gown, with her thin, sad face. She would have understood too, why Sue had so carefully supplied herself with two hymn books, that she might naturally offer one, with the brightest of smiles, to the girl in front.

The next day Sue professed a burning eagerness for a shade of old rose surah, and apparently absorbed in the search for it at Black's silk counter, suddenly looked up to exclaim, "I beg your pardon, but aren't you the Miss Vaughan who attends our church and sings such a clear, rich contralto?"

Cornelia flushed with pleasure.

"I attend Dr. Steven's church," she assented,

"my name is Vaughan, and I think you are the young lady who was kind enough to pass me her hymn book yesterday."

"Then you will be kind enough to do something for me, I hope. We are planning the loveliest cantata for our Mission Circle, and we are quite in despair because Mademoiselle Leboir, who always took our alto parts, has gone away, and we have not known where to get another voice strong enough. It isn't so very hard, and you'll only have to run it over a time or two in the evenings. We pay ten dollars—little enough to make it a tremendous favor, if you will do it."

To Cornelia, working for six dollars a week, the sum seemed munificent.

"If—if you think I could do it."

"I am sure you could. That was an utterly new hymn we had yesterday. Didn't you read it at sight?"

Cornelia nodded. "I used to study music before—a long time ago," she said.

Thus it came about that Cornelia practised with the young music lovers in the pretty cantata, and was received so cordially, and so much as though she had always been one of them, that her old views of the selfishness and arrogance in the world began to fade away.

The ten dollars helped her scant support, but the warm friendliness helped her heart and soul as no Aladdin's wealth ever could have.

Jessica, seeing these things, actually learned some new lessons in charity, and went home the night of the cantata singing to the air of Cornelia's sweetest solo, "Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly." Then she added under her breath, "I'll help her too—out of that store and into pleasanter places ; and wait until I show them that I have learned how to do it."

IV

BESIDE ALL WATERS

“**I** WISH it was all to do again, mamma. I’m so sorry to have it done with.”

“What, sweet?”

“Why, Christmas—the work, the planning, the looking forward to it. I don’t know how well folks feel, now that it’s gone, but I feel woefully blank.”

Mrs. Field looked with sympathy into the face of the pale little girl in the great chair at the window. “But you still have your pretty, soft slippers, your manicure set, the new books, and the oranges,” she said with the oddest little smile.

“Ye-es,” Joy replied slowly.

“Bless your heart!” the tender mother said suddenly, with an impetuous movement toward the big chair and a sudden caress of the tired little figure. “Don’t think your stupid marmee doesn’t see. It is not the receiving, but the giving that is blessed; and now that Kitty has the

toboggan cap you worked so faithfully to finish, now that Tom has his warm wristlets and Madge her pretty bag, and the old marmee the breakfast cap that has made her so vain, and all other folks their various 's'prises,' the fun has gone, and the childie draws her little white chin down into her laces until she looks like that little stem of lilies that has wilted since Christmas too."

The white chin rounded a bit then with the sudden smile that seemed somehow always to follow the mamma's funny little sympathies, but the mamma went right on with the brightest answering smile: "Now, I am going off for a run down town to see how Biddy and the chicks are doing with their chicken-pox. I don't mind leaving my wilted blossom here one little bit, for I mean to give her something to think about before I leave." Then with an air of gravest mystery she added: "How would you like a bit of Christmas every day—that part of Christmas, I mean?"

"The giving, mamma?"

"Yes, childie, the giving."

"To Tom, and Madge, and——"

Mrs. Field was looking suggestively toward the window and shaking her head. "Look out," she said briefly. "It will give you something to think about while I'm gone." From

the doorway she called with a gay little laugh, "What, Tom and Madge! Those two pampered pets of indulgent parents!" Then with sudden seriousness, "'Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters.' Good-bye now, and God bless the little sower."

For a long time after Joy heard the street door close, she lay looking out over the hyacinths that bloomed in her window and wondering. "Beside all waters—sowing, giving! Well, Tom and Kitty and Madge really have about all they need, and——" and then she caught the lever at the side of her great chair and changed her position so that she could see the street, for she had caught through the frosty air the sound of a familiar whistle.

"It's that freckle-faced Lang boy," she exclaimed, "and he's out collecting, or something."

Then she began thinking about the Lang boy and trying to recall what she had heard about him the night before. She had been almost asleep there in the dusk, and yet she had heard through her drowsiness Tom and his friend Ed saying that Lang was away from home for the first time, that he was a "regular brick of a fellow," but had begun to play billiards with some West End fellows and had "sort o' dropped out of Christian Endeavor and Sunday-school."

Joy watched him out of sight. "How bright and merry his whistle sounds! just as Will Harrows' used to before he began to drink." Then there dawned a new thoughtfulness upon her face. "Why, what an idea!" she exclaimed aloud, so ringingly that the canary sunning himself in the window set up a lively chatter. "Well, it'll do no harm, anyway," she said again, after watching the downy bird contemplatively.

She lay thinking a long time, occasionally writing a bit on the tablet Tom had given her for Christmas. "There now! I think that will do," she said finally, with the air of a judge. "It sounds ever so friendly and interested, and perhaps it will make him think. I mean to sign it, 'Your fairy godmother,' and then if he plays billiards again how will he know that my sharp eyes may not shine out suddenly from beside the balls and my wings flutter across the green table and put him to flight! If his new godmother can't see him always, there is One who can. I'll help him to feel that too. I must be very careful," with a happy little sigh. "'Beside all waters.' But that couldn't mean Will Harrows; he's past working with," and then she fell into another brown study.

When Mrs. Field came home with all her

funny stories of Biddy's droll children and their chicken-pox, she found the sunniest-faced little sick girl she had seen for many a day, busily handling her brushes by the flower-decked window.

"Where's that 'woefully blank' daughter of mine?" she asked; and Joy answered seriously, "Getting ready to sow. Are her seeds worthy?" and she held up the quaint little letter to Darrell Lang.



As she read there was the least mistiness about Mrs. Field's eyes; but she only said, with a squeeze of the busy fingers, "No one but my dear little daughter could have said it in that pretty, touching way."

Joy looked up with a grateful light in her big gray eyes. "But, mamma," she said, "I want

you to write the letter to Will Harrows. You can give it the mother tone. He hasn't any mother, you know, poor fellow! And I'm doing this to go with it. It's a pledge-card, marmee. I thought if I painted the very daintiest one I could, he might feel more interested in it, knowing that somebody cared that much."

"Bless your heart!" Mrs. Field said again, looking down upon the lovely card and the solemn words lettered so beautifully upon it. Then she too began to catch the spirit of the sower. "One, motherless; the other quite away from home influence," she said. "Something ought to be done about those boys."

It was so much more of a something than Joy had ever dreamed, that it took time to bring it about.

In the meantime, away on the next morning's post flew the two little letters, followed by many a wistful wish from the girl at the window.

For a "shut in" it was wonderful how much sowing she found to do. There was the lonesome spinster school teacher who passed to and from the Normal every day. Joy painted her the very sweetest swinging calendar, with June-time boughs and birds all over it, and sent it with a cunning bit of poetry from "A friend who loves you dearly."

Also there was the cross old maid who lived on the next square, and walked so unbendingly and looked as though she had never had a bit of sweet in her whole life. Such a time as Joy had selecting the loveliest hyacinth from her window-garden, tying it up in the neatest way, and writing a verse to suit it, and to tell poor Miss Carman that somebody had a pleasant thought for her!

There were besides, the washerwoman, and poor, tired Mrs. Chase, who sewed for a living, and the lame boy who brought the "Herald." There seemed no end to Joy's Christmas giving. Then too, each new plan suggested another until she had all the work she could do, and was happy as a lark all day.

"If only you don't wear out, your very cheeriness will cure you," the old doctor said; and Joy, lying in her easy-chair one night just before the lamps were lighted, heard something which made her feel almost well in earnest.

Tom and Ed were talking again by the fire, and it was Will Harrows' name that first attracted her thoughts from their own wanderings. Ed was saying in his most impressive way, "They say it's a dead sure thing that Will Harrows has stopped drinking. The fellows can't drag him into a saloon now. He says he has

signed a pledge and he doesn't mean to go back on his word. Isn't that splendid?"

"Well, I should say!" Tom answered. "And I can tell you something else; I believe Lang had something to do with it. You see, about a month ago Lang dropped those West End fellows and all their dissipation, and he told me confidentially that a letter from somebody's little mother made him do it. 'It's pretty tough on a fellow to be away from his mother,' he said to me, 'and I know how to feel for Will Harrows better than you chaps can.' I guess he has been working with Will."

"Shouldn't wonder," Ed replied thoughtfully, while Joy at her window smiled radiantly in the shadow.

But if ever a girl grew into her name, Joy did, when, a few days later, she heard that "Marmee Field," having fitted up the room over the library, meant to take Darrell Lang and Will Harrows right under her own wing, to "mother" the big, lonesome fellows to their hearts' content.

"Well, you two are in luck!" the boys of their set said to them in talking the matter over afterward. "There isn't a lady in town who loves boys and knows how to make the right sort of them, as Mrs. Field does."

"She's a grand, good woman!" Will exclaimed fervently. "If I don't turn out 'the right sort' with her to help me, and dear little Miss Joy too, then I'm not worth saving, that's all."

When he repeated that thought with awkward boyishness to the "grand, good woman" herself, she said, with her white hand resting for a moment on his brown curls and her kind face serious, "'When I said, my foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up'"; while Joy, in the old chair which she would soon leave, according to the doctor's promise, thought with a quiver of happiness of that other text of the mother's and its good fruit, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters."

V

A LITTLE DRESSMAKER

“**T**HERE now, that’s just as stylish and pretty as it can be!” said Amy Warner, gazing complacently at the rosy face reflected in her mirror. “How æsthetic you will look, Mistress Amy! That green is delicious and the quaint style is as becoming as can be.”

“Mistress Amy” being often alone in her pretty room, had fallen into a habit of carrying on extended conversations with herself; and the sunny day, the becoming gown—tried on for the last time to receive its finishing touches—and her delight in its prettiness, made the conversation longer and more rapid than usual.

“When I think,” she chattered to the Amy in the glass, “of the gowns I used to wear—that awful blue thing with the baggy basque, and that striped red and brown with the ugly, buncy drapery——” and she gave an amused laugh, full of little exclamation points.



“How aesthetic you will look, Mistress Amy.”

"That was before I learned to make my own clothes, but now! Isn't it trim and pretty, doesn't it set well, and isn't it a very type of simplicity and quaintness? So glad I haven't an ugly, squeezed-in waist; how it would look in this! Now I must remember to keep the velvet tucked up high at the back of the neck and the point of the corsage straight. To carry out the idea of the cut, I ought to walk rather languidly and use a dark fan and an old-time vinaigrette. Now I'll lay it away till evening and run and help mamma with Johnnie's shirt-waists."

"Amy, you are invaluable," Mrs. Warner said a few minutes later, watching the young girl's flying fingers as they deftly handled the new shirt-waists; and yet, pleased as she felt over the timely aid, before the afternoon was done something that was not pleasure brought the worried little wrinkles to her forehead. She had never noticed before how much Amy talked of dress. Could it be absorbing as much of her thought as it seemed to be? Amy had never been vain, of that she felt sure, for though bright and sweet and attractive, Amy was not pretty, as everybody knew—none better than Amy herself.

"Do you remember, dear, two years ago, how

you wriggled about when Miss Spriggs tried to fit your dresses, how you disliked it, and how you amused us by wishing that people could be 'born with feathers like birds'?"

Amy laughed merrily. "I was thinking of it only to-day," she said, "and of some of the frightful-looking things I used to wear. You were not to blame, dear; you couldn't have been expected to plan for so big a girl as I. Poor Miss Spriggs! I don't wonder she never got anything to fit. What a guy I must have looked!"

"I don't know," Mrs. Warner commented thoughtfully. "It never seemed so to me. I don't think people noticed your clothes much then; you always looked happy and bright and—and healthy."

"Healthy!" exclaimed Amy laughing. "Oh, you dear, funny mamma. I was exuberantly energetic and busy, wasn't I? Well, people have to be healthy to keep up that kind of thing very long, sure enough. I guess I was rather a tornado with all the plans I tried to work out, and all the studies I had on hand. And in that red and brown horror—oh, dear!" Amy laughed again at the thought of it.

Little Mrs. Warner felt a flush upon her cheek. It puzzled her, this new something in Amy.

With a view to talking of other things, she asked hastily, "Has Walter learned his new song, yet? Papa is very anxious to hear it."

"Really, mamma, I haven't had a minute to try it with him. You know last night I was busy as could be fixing the shirred piece for the front of my new gown, and the night before that I was hard at work on the buttonholes. If Walter were only out of school we could practise at odd minutes during the day."

Mrs. Warner sighed, but added cheerfully, "Oh, well, that 'Tarantelle' of yours will make up to papa for the other until it can be learned."

Amy looked rather guilty, though she said nothing. Her father would not ask her to play that night, for they were all going to the concert; perhaps before another evening she could practise the "Tarantelle," as she had neglected it for a week.

"There now, mamma, the last stitch is done. We'll just have time to brush up for tea." And Amy sped along the hall to her own room.

They had early teas at Elmwood, and as soon as the family had assembled in the library after tea this evening, Walter asked: "Can't we have a chapter of 'Zig-zag Journeys' now?"

"Oh, dear, no; I must run up and dress for the concert."

"Why, it's only seven o'clock. You used to dress in half an hour."

"Dressing wasn't a fine art, then," Amy retorted laughingly. "If you knew how many little bits it takes to make my harmony in green——" and away she went upstairs.

"Seems to me Amy doesn't have time for nothin' any more," Roger declared disgustedly. "She used to pump up with me in the swing, and read stories to Johnnie and me, and play tunes for us, and now she's just always a-fixin' somethin', or hurryin' to get dressed."

Amy meanwhile, in her own room, was practising just the movement of her fan which seemed to correspond best with the "languid drapery" of the green gown.

It was the Mendelssohn Quintette Club they were to hear, and Amy knew that "everybody" would be there. She hoped that Mrs. Krum, just returned from New York, would notice how she had improved. She could even fancy her saying, "Why, Amy Warner is growing almost pretty." She wondered if that over-dressed Nell Ward wouldn't feel half-ashamed when brought into contrast with "this simple, charming thing." She hoped that Lincoln Dale, who was coming for her, would appreciate it—— She started and listened.

A great raindrop had hit the window pane—two, three, a lusty patter. Amy shaded her eyes and stared out into the darkness dismayed.

“Oh, dear! Absolutely pouring, and this green spots. I can’t wear it; what shall I do? My brown’s too shabby, my black silk too nice, and if I wear the terra-cotta some of those girls will think I haven’t had anything new for a year. Besides, I haven’t a single hat that goes well with it.”

Then a bright idea occurred to her, “My old cashmere! I might wear a black lace jabot down the front of it, do my hair in a Psyche knot, and carry mamma’s black lace fan. I’ll make it look pretty yet.”

And it did look pretty, she thought, until she had settled comfortably into the seat beside Lincoln and saw just before her Nell Ward in a dress that was “not her own taste, certainly,” being particularly artistic and pretty. Amy lost the benefit of the first two numbers, trying to see how the odd drapery was attached at the shoulder and what new wrinkle Nell had in the fashion of dressing her hair.

Going home over moist walks but under clear skies, Walter, Lincoln, and the music-loving papa discussed with delight the different beautiful selections they had heard. Amy said little.

It was strange how the change in her dress had spoiled her evening's pleasure.

"Never mind, I'll wear it to-morrow night at Kit Brown's *conversazione*," she thought; and still planning for that and wondering whether she should wear pink roses or white snowdrops over the green, she fell asleep.

"Amy may not be pretty," her brothers had often commented, "but oh, my, how she can talk!" And truth to tell, when the merry tongue chattered and the brown eyes danced, her friends forgot how inclined to plainness her round face was.

But alas for the merry tongue and the dancing eyes at Kitty Brown's *conversazione*! There was nothing piquant about that green gown; it was plain, severe, and flowing, and Amy knew better than to ruin its effect by liveliness of manner. Conscious all the evening that she was thoroughly "correct" and looking her best, she yet wondered why she went home feeling blank and dull and dissatisfied.

The sight of the sweeping green gown in her mirror brought a burst of tears.

"I never looked so well and I never had such a miserable time," she said. "Everybody else had a merry evening, even Minnie Beck in that dowdy old gray-and-brown plaid." Then some

new train of thought caused Mistress Amy to sit bolt upright and stare very fixedly at nothing, finally, with an odd laugh, clapping one quick hand over her mouth.

“‘If thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth,’” she said. “Dear me! I have been evil-thinking all the time and I hardly knew it. I thought it wonderfully clever and good to make my own clothes and do my own planning; and to think that I did not see that I was growing vain as vain could be and actually feeling a contemptuous pity for dear old Minnie and good little Sue! I deserved to have a miserable time—self-absorbed, ridiculous creature! Did I think of a thing besides how my folds fell, how that velvet set, and how superior in general my array was, compared with—the brown-and-gray plaid, for instance?”

“I suppose Minnie hardly knew what she wore. She spent the evening entertaining one and another with bright, interesting bits that did them all good, I know, while I—I simply couldn’t talk at all, for fear it wouldn’t be ‘in keeping.’ What a fool I was! I think God gave me a dose of particular dullness just to open my wicked eyes; and I honestly believe that I’ve learned the lesson he meant to teach. How could I think sensible, helpful things,

when my mind was just a cramped little quarter through which stylish collars, elegant sleeves, and stately gowns went trooping? Now I mean to try to remember that good old quotation from St. Ephraim, 'Think of good that you may avoid thinking of evil,' and I'll add to it, 'and do a little honest, serious, profitable living, to avoid the snare of frills and draperies and small affectations.' "

It was two weeks later that Mrs. Warner said rather shyly to Amy, "Do you know, dear, I had an unreasonable little worry about you not long ago?"

"About me, mamma?" Amy asked. But before any more could be said, Roger's brown head appeared in the doorway.

"Say, sis, papa's getting hungry for some music, and Walter wants him to hear your duet. Come on down."

"All right, small boy, in a minute. But mamma," and the voice grew earnest, "I know what you mean and indeed I hope there'll be no cause for worrying any more. I was as blind as a bat, until all in a minute God opened my eyes before a very new kind of mirror. After this, when I fit my new gowns, I mean to think more of another sort of fitness, the fitness of heart and of soul."

“Now that’s the kind of dressmaker I love,” Mrs. Warner said impulsively, watching her daughter out of sight; and a moment later, listening with a glow of pride to the expressive duet, she added emphatically, “the very kind of dressmaker I love!”

VI

BARBARA'S STRATAGEM

JED rested both arms on the rail fence and looked out over the cornfield with wrinkles of perplexity on his brown face. "It must be Barbara," he thought. "And out in that broiling sun too. It's enough to frizzle her hair. Barbara, oh-h Bar-ba-ra!" raising his voice to a shout; but Barbara, out in the cornfield, hurried all the faster on to the walnut tree and its friendly shade.

With a long whistle Jed vaulted the fence and hurried after her. Evidently she had not heard his call; but what in the name of all the blackbirds had sent her racing out to that walnut tree when the house was cool and shady and the hammocks swung on the breezy porch?

The nearer he approached her the deeper grew the perplexed wrinkles, until suddenly they were all chased away by an expression of blank, open-eyed wonder. Barbara crying—crying as though her heart would break—pretty, merry Barbara!

They had been friends and comrades from babyhood, and never before had Jed witnessed a storm like this. He felt uneasy. Perhaps he would better run back across the fields to wait until the skies cleared; but how could he leave her like this? Poor Barbara! He felt very, very sorry for her. He stepped nearer, and touching one soft braid of her pretty brown hair, asked nervously:

"What is it, Barbara dear? Can't I help you? What makes you so sad?"

"Sad!" The emphasis of the monosyllable made him jump and step back a pace. "Sad, you goose! Sad! I'm in a perfect towering rage, that's what's the matter with me. Do I look sad, pray?" and a laugh rang out upon the hot air, ending with a wrathful sob as she shook the tears from the brown lashes. "I'm furiously angry, and I can't help just howling about it. It's so horrible, Jed, to be furious about a thing and not know how to stop it."

The mixed rhetoric puzzled poor Jed as much as the tears had, and he asked in bewilderment, "Do you mean you don't know how to stop being furious, or how to stop the cause of the fury, or—what do you mean, anyway, Barb? What has brought on this towering rage?"

"Mamma is working herself to death."

Every word was measured off with a nod of the brown head and a flash of the angry eyes. Jed would have laughed if Barbara had not looked so desperately in earnest ; but he had no time to do so before she continued excitedly :

“ You wouldn't imagine that this is our regular sweeping day, to look at me, would you? I'm to sit quiet with my books or fancy work, I am ; and there is mamma in that hateful house, with the perspiration dripping from every pore, hot, dust-covered, tired, and with every possible prospect of a big attack of neuralgia to pay for getting so overheated. This sort of thing has been going on ever since I came home from school ; mamma sweeping, dusting, cake-making, sewing, rushing around from morning until night with a dustcloth in her hand and fire in her eye, while I stand around and gnash my teeth with impotent rage because I'm not allowed to help in any way. Why? You may well ask why. Well, sir, for fear I won't do it properly. How can she know how I'd do it when she never tries me? Perhaps it wouldn't be all right at first, but do I look like a dolt? Couldn't I learn? ”

Jed didn't think she looked in the least like a dolt, and he did think she could learn, but he didn't have time to say so.

"It's an outrageous shame! Mamma has no time to read, to write, to sing, to think even. She has a glorious voice. Don't I remember how it used to thrill this assembled town on special occasions? Now she is simply a housemaid, a drudge. Why not keep a house girl? Can't papa afford it? Well I should say he can; and doesn't he storm privately as much as I, and meekly propose getting a housemaid, once a week? And doesn't mamma flash scorn from her pretty, tired eyes, and tell him that no hired girl could do her work; that she'd be sure not to shake out the draperies daily or sweep in the corners. I almost want to swear!"

Jed looked horrified, then, boy-like, proposed a few remedies for the evil under discussion; but as his suggestions were received with either shouts of laughter or silent derision, he subsided sympathetically into Barbara's own state of abject despondency, and spent with her a very dark afternoon for so sunny a day.

The next morning, bright and early, as he and Barbara were to go blackberrying—"to give mamma a better chance to kill herself—nice weather for jam-making," Barbara had snapped—he and his buckets were waiting upon the piazza, but when that young woman stepped out, she simply announced, "Can't go."

"Well, that's nice, after I've come a mile for you! You look precious sorry."

"Don't be sarcastic, Jed. Mamma is really sick, just as I knew she would be. She has perfect paroxysms of pain right along, and though just now she is sleeping, encased in mustard plasters and surrounded by hot water bottles, of course I can't leave her."

"Of course not. But Barbara, you talk as if you hadn't any heart. How can you look as merry as a skylark with your mother ill as that?"

"Oh, Jed!" and Barbara clapped her hands softly. "It is too lovely! Of course I am sorry she is sick; but that blessed doctor has commanded that she stay in bed one good, long week, and then be packed off to some springs in the mountains. It's liver trouble too, not serious, but requiring rest and attention; and—oh, Jed, you stupid, don't you see my chance? Nurse first, and then housemaid; a chance to prove that I have a head for something besides poetry, and hands for something besides fancy work."

Jed whistled. "Well, Barbara, upon my word, you're a queer one. I'll go and get some blackberries anyway—enough for your tea. Meanwhile try to get a little decent, daughterly sorrow into your face." And he was off.

How Barbara's feet flew all that day! Whenever not needed at her mother's side she was flitting from room to room doing the regular Saturday work with a vim.

Were ever sheets so thoroughly aired or pillows so deftly encased and patted and put into place? How she enjoyed planning for dinner, ordering the marketing, and thoroughly straightening the few rooms that had accumulated "muss" of any sort after yesterday's hard sweeping.

Then, in the late afternoon, she sat in the still room where poor Mamma Lyons slept again, after the last sharp aches had become easier to bear, and swiftly sent the darning needle on its mission in and out of the close-laid threads on the boys' well-worn socks. She was wondering if Tom and Howard carried shot in their shoes to wear such ghastly holes, when Mamma Lyons opened her eyes and groaned feebly.

"Mamma, are you worse?" And Barbara was at her bedside in an instant.

"Oh, no, dear, I feel well enough now; but here it is five o'clock or so, nothing on hand for the Sunday dinner, no cake made, and the house—what must the house look like by this time!"

"Not half-bad, mamma. I put the rooms in

order while you were sleeping this morning, and the boys have been very careful all day not to tumble things up. The Sunday marketing is all done. As to the cake, I found a new recipe, and you have no idea what dainty cake Biddy has made from it; she didn't know she could till she tried it. It was baked nicely by the time the bread was ready for the oven, and she didn't hurry much either."

Mrs. Lyons looked incredulous. Then, as a new worry passed through her head, she sighed, "Ah, those sheets. Two of them were torn, and by the end of the week the boys will have them split from hem to hem."

"Why, mamma!" This from Barbara with would-be reproach. "Did you suppose I would put torn sheets on the beds? I mended them carefully first. I aired all the bedding too, thoroughly, just as you always do on Saturdays, and I have mended Teddy's shirt and have nearly all the stockings darned."

If Mrs. Lyons was surprised at these statements she had reason to be more surprised before her week's imprisonment was over; for Barbara prepared everything for her departure to the springs, besides acting as faithful nurse and keeping the house in excellent order.

"Don't kill yourself, dear, while I am gone,"

were the last words of motherly solicitude as the surrey rolled down the road toward the station ; and Papa Lyons smiled broadly at Barbara, who stood waving them off.

"Success to you, housekeeper ; and good-bye," he called.

"Bless his old heart," cooed Barbara to the gatepost, as the last glint of sunlight on the black surrey was lost around a turn in the road. "He'll keep our secret."

It was rather a jolly secret, the boys said, when Barbara explained it.

"Of course I should break down too, if I did all mamma's work," she said ; "and besides, she would never consent to my permanently dropping my art studies. So papa and I have fixed it up, and I'm sure Theresa will be the very best sort of a housemaid by the time she has had three weeks' training in mamma's particular methods."

Barbara was not far wrong. Theresa was willing and strong, and neat as a pin, and it did not take her long to remember just how Mrs. Lyons wanted the broom handled, the curtains cleaned, the dusting done, and the mirrors, windows, and lamp-chimneys washed. Once instructed, she was faithful in carrying out orders, and Barbara confided to Jed privately that she

believed Theresa could handle the vases and ornaments every bit as carefully as the mother could.

When that lady returned, with color in her cheeks and a new brightness in her eyes, and discoursed with enthusiasm upon the magnificent mountain scenery, and the renewed youth of



Papa Lyons and herself, Barbara demurely suggested that she occasionally take such trips without getting down to "mustard plaster underwear" first.

"But, my dear, you would be broken down

in health, then. I know how you must have worked to keep the house in such immaculate order as this."

"Oh, no," carelessly replied Barbara. "I have hardly turned my fingers over for a week, unless you count making jelly last week—beautiful jelly too—mamma."

While Mrs. Lyons gasped for breath the de-

lighted children explained what a "regular brick" Theresa was, how quietly and thoroughly she did her work, and how mamma might give up the position of housemaid at once and for good.

What doubts that mother may have had were put to inglorious flight with a few days' trial of the new arrangement, and from that time on the boys saucily called her their rejuvenated mamma, while Barbara, painting from still life on the cool piazza, with Jed reading aloud, was happy in the knowledge that dear Mamma Lyons, if not one of the group, was equally cool and content, reading, writing, or waking the echoes with her glorious voice.

VII

HOW EDITH GREW CONTENTED

EDITH ELDRED was unquestionably out of sorts. A scowl, the blackest and fiercest, sat upon her brow; and within her heart a multitude of angry thoughts capered so riotously that they actually hurried her along like so many spiteful imps about her footsteps. Tucked well under one arm was a homely brown parcel, which no one would have suspected was the immediate cause of the big tears that were slowly welling to Edith's blue-gray eyes.

"Like a common butcher boy!" the imps were kindly suggesting. "It isn't enough that you must stay home from the lovely concert—the only one of the girls not there—but you must wear shabby clothes too, and work from morning till night, while——" but there her thoughts were cut short by the necessity of hurrying yet faster past a group of girls chattering an instant on a corner. Pretty, stylish girls they

were, and Edith hoped that her swift dash past them in the dusk would be unobserved.

"Why, wasn't that Edith?" one merry voice called; but already Edith was far down the street.

"They've been to Elizabeth's lunch party, I suppose," she was saying as she fled. "Of course I couldn't go. I never seem to go anywhere, or have any of the good times the other girls do. Yet I have tried always to be correct, at least—a lady, if not a very gay one. And to think that while other girls trip about carrying their muffs and pretty card-cases, I am sneaking home burdened with an uncouth bundle of horrid, flabby liver!"

At any other time this most tragic climax would have sent Edith herself into peals of laughter; but to-night this plebeian liver from a downtown butcher's seemed the last stroke of an unkind fate, and there was nothing funny about it. Reaching home, she deposited it quickly upon the kitchen table, and escaped to her own room. During her absence the boys had evidently returned from their hunting expedition, for in her stove there crackled a cheerful fire whose comforting warmth was gradually creeping to the coldest corners of her too airy room.

"Too bad I couldn't have frozen too!" she

exclaimed. "What is the good of living, anyway? Cold housework all the morning, grinding in that dreadful school all the afternoon, and to what end? That I may starve along and pinch and save for bare necessities, and be just simply, miserably unhappy. Mamma hasn't a grain of pride, or she couldn't be singing like a jubilant thrush downstairs, when to-morrow she'll have to wear that three-year-old bonnet to church. To send me after liver! Nobody carries parcels these days—great, clumsy thing—and when all the world was out calling in its best kid gloves! Oh, what's the use of supper"—as the bell tinkled out—"or of anything else? I'd like to know. I wish I could just stay here dormant, until good times come again."

But she went down to supper, nevertheless.

"Concert to-night, sis?" one of the boys incautiously asked.

"Sis," generally so ready of speech, made two ineffectual attempts to reply, and then left the table.

Mrs. Eldred looked after her regretfully. "I am afraid Edith is really distressed over missing this treat to-night. It is hard, for she loves music so dearly, and there are so few opportunities to hear anything really fine in so small a place as this."

"Why doesn't she go, then?"

"The seats are a dollar and a half, and she absolutely hasn't the money. Mrs. White hasn't had a very full attendance this year, is hard pressed herself, and has not been able to pay her teachers either as much or as promptly as usual. Edith has to deny herself a good deal."

"I've got a dollar and a half. She shall have it this blessed minute!" declared generous John, and with a quick "Excuse me," he bolted from the room, only to return crestfallen, a few minutes later.

"She says it's too late to get a seat now, or find anybody to go with, that I need my money, and that she doesn't want to go anyhow. Girls are awfully funny."

"Well, we'll pop corn to-night. Edith enjoys that; and then she'll feel better."

"But she isn't coming down. She said to tell mamma she's not feeling well and is going right to bed."

"How unlike Edith!" exclaimed her father in some surprise. "But she will feel all right to-morrow, after a good night's sleep."

So the cheery mother hoped also: but the sunny morning brought no sunshine to the elder sister's face. Mechanically she did her morning duties, and began to dress for church.

"I am so glad you have your pretty, warm, new dress," her mother said; and Edith, as she donned the gown, felt the first gleam of returning animation.

"How prettily it fits, and how stylish the big puffed sleeves look! Hold my jacket for me, mother, please, if you are all ready," and carefully she thrust her arms into the jacket sleeves, or part way in, and then—she stopped dismayed, for the "stylish" puffs refused to go by any method of folding or crushing into the close-fitting jacket. With a look of utter consternation Edith dropped into the nearest seat.

"Oh, Edith, it's too bad!" her mother exclaimed. "The puffs are lined, I suppose, to make them stiff—why, what is that on the front of your jacket?"

Edith started up, and scrutinized the poor little jacket. "Nothing but blood!" she gasped, in a tone that said life could hold no worse calamities. "It must have dripped last night from that awful liver, and my only wrap is ruined! But I couldn't have worn it anyhow. Nobody wears those little tight sleeves now-a-days. Come on. I'm ready to go."

"But you'll really catch cold, Edith."

"It can't more than kill me," came the mournful reply. "I'll not miss church, at any rate."

When the unfortunate small brother remarked upon the vanity of girls who would "rather show off their new duds than be comfortable," the martyr grew more martyr-like and freezing, and her world more "stale and unprofitable."

The good old minister's sermon that Sunday morning was strangely interwoven in Edith's mind with such reflections as, "Nice time you'll have this winter, with actually not a wrap to protect you from the cold," and "You could contrive a way if you just didn't want to be miserable and abused."

Miserable and abused she certainly seemed all that day, until the very atmosphere about her grew cold and foggy. Thicker and thicker her clouds had grown, until there wasn't any sunlight anywhere.

Edith cried herself to sleep that night, and wondered if the girls who went to the luncheon and the concert would weep and pity her when they knew that she had lived her few dreary years only to die at last of consumption caught while they were wrapping themselves in plush and sealskin.

She was finishing the housework next morning when one of these apostrophized maidens rang the front door bell.

"May Edith come with me down to the

wharf?" she heard her asking. "It's the most pitiful case, Mrs. Eldred, and Edith has so much heart and energy and good sense, I know she will be the very one to go with me to visit these people."

Not being in the stylish new gown, Edith managed to slip very easily into the despised jacket, and the dark spots were forgotten as she hurried off with Elizabeth to the river front.

"We missed you so, Saturday," Elizabeth said fondly; "but you're such a useful, busy girl, Edith dear. I'm glad you don't teach in the mornings, or you couldn't come with me here, and we girls who are working 'In His Name' have calls like this which cannot be put off."

The wind blew cold from the river, and gladly enough the two friends hurried into the shelter of the great wharf boat. At its farther end a sight met Edith's eyes which she never forgot.

Upon a pile of straw a gaunt man lay, his clothes in rags, his eyes bright with fever. Beside him crouched a woman scantily clad, nursing a child whose pitiful cries mingled with the moans of the sick man. In the feeble warmth of a small stove four little girls huddled, the oldest of the group dividing among them a hoard of coarse, dry bread.

The story was simple as it was sad—overflows down the river, the loss of the scant harvests of a small farm, a starting away for work and better prospects, sickness, and finally this!

"Ef I could on'y git well, er ef the girls wuz on'y boys," the man exclaimed apologetically. "They're nice little girls; an' peaked though they be, you wouldn't find a prettier bunch o' little girls anywhere. They're smart too, an'



ready to do what they kin; but they ain't no chance," and fatherly pride mingled with the distress in the poor man's eyes.

Edith and Elizabeth asked questions, observed closely, found all the needs, and were ready to plan all the remedies.

Edith reached home at eleven, and went straight to the big boxes in the attic. "Three castaway skirts—but they're warm—stockings for the barefooted girl, and hoods for the bare-

headed ones. 'Ef on'y our boys wuz girls,' there'd be more. I must call on the neighbors. Oh, and Dr. West, bless him! he'll be ready as he always is, with his big heart and his little medicine chest, to make the sick man forget he ever had an ache."

That night after school as Edith, singing a merry song, hung her freshly washed jacket before the fire, Mrs. Eldred asked half nervously:

"Will you try to wear it anyway?"

"Why, of course, you dearest mother. It is easy enough to cut the stiff lining out of those puffs; then they will go right in. Every stain has washed off beautifully. He's a turner by trade, mother, that poor fellow, and Mr. Potter says he'll take him right into the machine works as soon as Dr. West gets him cured. We're going to rent the little Dodds cottage for them on Tenth street."


There was a moment's pause, and then Edith added, as though the thought had just struck her: "Mother, did you ever realize that we are the happiest family in the whole world, and the most contented?"

Mrs. Eldred only smiled as she said, "If ever you forget it, Edith, try some such remedy as you have tried to-day."

VIII

EUGENIA'S SACRIFICE

“CAN’T you stop, dearie, and sit with me?”

 It was a tremulous old voice, and Eugenia dropped sketch-box and easel, irresolute. Yet how could she stop? It was such a lovely day for sketching, and lovely days had been so few since she came to South Harbor. There was that delicious bit of bluff and wood and sandy beach down by the old road to the sea. She had thought of it for days, longing for the storms to pass and the sun to shine that she might hurry away to catch it on her canvas. More than that, there was the academy prize, of which she had dreamed, and toward which she had struggled for busy months. To win that meant fifty shining dollars—money enough to make the old home in Newton blossom like the rose, to get a new winter wrap for the hard-worked little mother, and to furnish the boys all around with new caps and mittens for their red little ears and fingers.

Yet that same mother, and those same boys, would they bid her go for this happy morning's sketching, when poor old Dame Pitou sat in the shade of Fisher Ben's door, her eyes too dim to read, and her paralyzed limbs unable to carry her to pleasanter places?

Propping her box and canvas against the wall, she turned to the old lady, saying brightly :

"Stop? Yes. And I'll unfold my stool and sit here just in front of you while we talk."

Dame Pitou, lonely old soul, was little given to talking, as Eugenia had discovered, but her gentle face lighted up at the girl's hearty tone, and grew sunnier with each passing moment.

Eugenia, watching her, thought of the lost sketch down by the sea road, and could not be sorry she had missed it. "Be of all things, first unselfish. Sacrifice! Sacrifice!" she said to herself, vaguely conscious that she was quoting something, and trying to drown the last regret at giving up possible fame with that seductive bit of sea and beach. Then a bright thought struck her.

"Dame Pitou," she exclaimed, with eager eyes on the placid face, "let me paint you! Couldn't you, please? You sit as still as any model, and so it would not tire you very much. So serene and sweet you look, that I'd call it 'Eventide,'

or 'Shadow Time,' or,—no, something suggestive of sunny old age; and, oh, it will make my fortune! Dear Dame Pitou, will you, will you?" and Eugenia clasped her hands in a very ecstasy of appeal.

Dame Pitou smiled her slow, sweet smile. "I've been many things in my time, little lady, but never a model," she said. "Begin when you will."

"You dear!" exclaimed the girl gratefully. "I'll set up my easel at once. Why did I never think of this before? All the sea roads imaginable could not interest me as a study of this sort will. You never could guess what dear little shadows play over your face, or how soft and beautiful the coloring is."

Brimful of enthusiasm she set to work, her



porte-crayon dashing in cabalistic lines; and meantime, still anxious to entertain the docile model whose solitary life had so often appealed to her sympathies, she talked a merry, rippling stream, until Dame Pitou, fairly catching the infection, talked merrily too.

"We had the happiest kind of a morning," she said to her room-mate and fellow art student, in their attic quarters that night.

"You and that old fossil at Skipper Ben's?"

"Why, Julia, how can you say it? She is as warm-hearted as can be; a real lady too—Southern, or French, or something. Strange she should have a son like Fisher Ben, such a rough sort of fellow!"

Julia laughed incredulously. "You didn't really think her the mother of that canvas-covered fisher of the seas?"

"Why, of course. The children call her Grandma Pitou."

"These fisher-children call anybody grandma," said Julia, dismissing the subject with a shrug.

And Eugenia wondered a bit, but was too well-bred to pry into other folks' lives, and so redoubled her effort to please the poor woman, who seemed so pitifully alone in the world.

When, after many mornings of faithful work, she dashed her brushes to the ground, and stood before the finished likeness, she could only say joyfully, "Dear Dame Pitou, it is your very self; and I love it, love it!"

"I love the artist better," Dame Pitou said with a courtly little bow, a warm light in her pleasant eyes. "It is what one calls a speaking likeness. Exhibit it as you wish, but I buy it of you. Is one hundred dollars too little?"

Eugenia started, her palette falling at her side. "Buy it—a hundred dollars!" she gasped.

"It will be a present for my son. When health takes me on another visit, he may have me at home too, you see."

Eugenia looked for a moment from the sweet old face on the canvas to its counterpart before her, and burst into tears.

"Is it too little?" Dame Pitou asked, perplexed.

"The hundred dollars?" and Eugenia laughed breathlessly through the tears. "It is a whole fortune. But, I gave up fifty dollars, I thought—and here—why it's like giving away your last dime and turning to find your pocketbook crammed. You fairy godmother, what are you doing in this rough place without even a pumpkin or a crystal slipper to tell the tale?"

"Rough house, I know it is, but as good as the place affords; and this air is like no other, my doctor says."

"But where is my sacrifice?" Eugenia questioned, apparently of herself.

Dame Pitou's eyes twinkled as she answered softly: "Perhaps it is no greater than mine when I pay you this," drawing the girl down beside her chair and slipping the bank notes into her hand.

Eugenia declared afterward that she never had felt so bewildered or so happy as when the academy picture, "At Evensong," won its first and dearest prize from "poor Dame Pitou."

IX

THE GIVER BLESSED

“**W**ELL, I don't know what we can do next,” Bertha Adler exclaimed despairingly, her dark eyebrows drawn together with perplexed wrinkles. “We've read to her, sung for her, and chattered to her by the hour, and yet, though she seems as grateful as can be, she isn't a bit happy with it all, as any one with eyes can see.”

“The fruits and flowers are no special treat,” Emily Perry sighed. “She is used to luxuries of all sorts.”

“And even good stories and books must get tame when there's nothing else to amuse, and a fellow can't help herself,” Dot Dillon said soberly.

The other girls laughed.

“‘A fellow,’ with a broken ankle-bone isn't in a very nice fix,” one of them assented; “and I suppose that our best efforts to amuse her must sometimes tire her out.”

"Girls!" It was Kitty Carroll's voice this time, and a little infection of hopefulness began to spread through the group. "We've been following a beautiful truth in a dreadfully one-sided way; that's what's the trouble. We've all been saying, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' and have blessed ourselves by showering time and oranges and half our pocket-money on dear old Blanche. Now suppose we give her a chance to win similar blessings, and do a little of the giving herself. I don't suppose it has ever occurred to her, lying there, a helpless invalid, day after day."

"Why, what an idea! What could she give, and how?"

"Innumerable things, and in many ways," Kitty answered brightly. "Her wrists are not broken, you know, if her ankle is. She can learn to crochet warm baby sacks for that blue-looking little baby of Mrs. Wade's. She can be well propped up with a lap-board before her and cut out work for the Saturday sewing-class; oh, there are dozens of little things she can do. One will lead to another. Then farewell to boredom for invalid Blanche!"

"What a head you have!" Bertha ejaculated with such honest admiration that a general laugh followed.

"But it must not seem a cut-and-dried scheme," Kitty warned. "The idea must occur to the child herself. Dot and I are going there after school. Trust us to manage it."

Here a sharp little bell scattered the smiling group and sent them to books and classes.

That evening two maidens entered the sick-room, taking with them a breath of fresh October air, and a sparkle of girlish brightness.

"How goes it, patient one?" Dot asked, kissing the fair cheek of her friend.

"Oh, very well, thank you. Every day is a day ended, you know."

"And you are glad to have them go?"

"Why, yes, Kitty, how could it be otherwise? Everybody has to bother with me, and I'm only a nuisance to myself."

"Blessed be nuisances!" Kitty said laughing. "That was what Rob called himself last night when he tried to wind my wool and got into such a muss. Boys are so funny, anyway. You see, I was in a frantic hurry, for I did want to get some crocheting begun, and yet there were all my lessons to get. So Rob tried to help me out by getting the wool ready."

"Well, he must be more interested in dresser mats and hair-pin balls than most brothers!" Blanche exclaimed, laughing too.

"Oh, but it wasn't to be hair-pin balls, or anything of that sort," Kitty interrupted eagerly. "Just comfortable baby sacks for the most frozen-up little specimen of humanity you ever saw, Mrs. Wade's baby—such a poor, miserable baby that Rob's warm heart quite melted over its case!"

Blanche was looking interested. An unwonted glow began to creep into her pale cheeks. "I wish I could crochet," she said. "Kitty, why couldn't I learn? I have time enough, goodness knows! If I could make those baby sacks, it would warm me more than the baby."

"Well, say now, fellows"—Dot's long association with six brothers of assorted sizes had made her speech shockingly boyish—"this looks like an opening for me. I have absolutely nothing to engage my valuable time after school hours for days to come. Why can't I teach you to crochet?"

"Oh, you dear! You may talk baseball and boxing all you please, if you'll only come."

"Happy I!" sighed Dot, with a saucy little courtesy toward Blanche. "I'll be on hand tomorrow then, at four, armed with balls and needles. Come, Kitty. If I don't actually drag you off, you'll be here till that charmed hour tomorrow. Don't you see how dark it's grow-

ing?" and Dot, tugging at her friend's sleeve, blew a shower of little kisses toward the invalid, and in another minute both girls were gone.

When Mrs. Rhea entered the room half an hour later she looked in some surprise at the sunshiny face of her daughter. "Did the girls bring you something quite new?" she asked wonderingly.

"Yes'm," with a soft laugh; "an idea! Mamma, which ought to wear better for a baby, blue or brown or gray?"

"Wear better? Baby?" and Mrs. Rhea looked so dazed that Blanche laughed as she had not "since the siege began."

But all that Mrs. Rhea did not know about that poor baby of the Widow Wade's, she learned very completely during the next week; and she and Blanche speedily found themselves a small co-operative society for the making and distributing of crocheted comfort.

"If," the mother said, coming in one evening, "all my heart hadn't been with my caged birdling here, I should surely have noticed sooner the distress of that poor little woman. Positively they are half frozen down there. I have told papa to order some coal sent right over. She can't refuse it; she'll not know whom to re-

fuse ; and I'll take good care she doesn't suspect me. The sacks, I told her, were just an invalid's pastime, and she took them gratefully. I wonder if a crocheted skirt or vest wouldn't be a comfortable thing for her to have?"



"Oh, yes, you blessed mamma! I can't wait to begin. And poor old Grandma Ashley too. Wouldn't a warm, ribbed skirt go well over her thin knees? Why, there is no end to it, is there?" And

Blanche fairly hugged her own knee under the down coverlet, to vent her enthusiasm.

A fortnight later, Bertha, Kitty, Emily, and Dot, were gathered about "the head of the supply department," as they had dubbed Blanche.

"In a week, girls, Dr. Carter says I'll be up

and about ; in another off at school, in the dear old paths again. But happy as I am at the prospect, I can't be much more content than I have been since——”

“Since you were seized with the bright idea of setting ankle-bones with crochet-hooks?” and little Dot laughed merrily.

“Girls,” said Blanche, for a moment serious, “you have spoiled me till I even dare preach to you. If ever you break any of your precious necks, and all the gifts of your dearest friends fail quite to bring you relief, just try a little gift-showering yourself.”

“In other words,” exclaimed Kitty, “the text from which you preach is, that ‘it is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Then Blanche wondered, though she joined with them, why all the girls laughed.

X

RUTH'S LESSON

“**I**F these precious steps don't shine when I am done it will not be my fault.”

Ruth Robbins spoke with emphasis, her words keeping time with the brisk scrub-brush. Presently the splashing of the water and the bumping of the brush, stopped long enough for the young girl to stand erect, stretch her rosy fingers, stiffened from their long hold of the rough brush, and look contentedly around.

How sweet and cool everything appeared in the early morning! The roses were covered with dew, the grass all a-sparkle, and the birds outdoing themselves in the old apple orchard. Half turning she reached to break a sprig of fragrant honeysuckle from the vine beside her, and just then she saw coming up the plank walk toward the gate, a girl, a pretty young girl in a stylish, morning street gown.

Ruth actually caught her breath. “Louise Chadwick! She is coming here!”

Almost overturning the pail of water in her haste, Ruth raced to the rear of the house and up to her own room, her cheeks red and burning. She dashed toward her collar box for a fresh collar, began a frantic hunt for her cuff-buttons, couldn't find her new shoes—everything seemed misplaced, somehow—and then presently heard her mother's gentle voice calling up the stairs:

"Ruth! Ruth! Louise wants to see you a moment."

Ruth finally reached the parlor, her face all a-flush, and the perspiration starting from every pore. Louise, it seemed to her, had never looked so cool and dainty as when, with a quiet apology for so early a call, she said:

"I came really to see your mother, but remembered a little business I have with you about that rose social we are getting up. I shall keep you but a moment."

It was certainly not many minutes later when Ruth, alone in the parlor, sat rocking and crying as hard as she could. Mrs. Robbins, looking in, gazed in astonishment.

"Why, Ruth, daughter, what has gone wrong?"

"Oh, everything!" Ruth answered hotly. "I never was so mortified in all my life. This old, faded dress, no collar, my old shoes—and

scrubbing right out there on the steps where she couldn't have helped seeing me! It would have been bad enough if I had not run away, but that made it ten times worse; for there was the horrid old scrub-pail and brush to tell the whole story even if she hadn't seen me, which I know she did. I'm so ashamed!"

Mrs. Robbins replied to this stormy outburst with no remonstrance, but asked quietly: "Were you ashamed before Louise came?"

"Before Louise came? Why, no, what was there to be ashamed of then?"

Mrs. Robbins looked amused. "I can't see, daughter," she said, "how the simple fact of Louise's coming could change the nature of either your work or your appearance."

"Oh, mamma, you're so funny! You never seem to see such things. Why I don't suppose Louise ever worked in her life!"

"Louise is an intelligent girl, Ruth, and whether she ever works or not, her good sense would tell her that we, with our large house, large family, small means, and one servant, must do the home duties or have them undone. You did a very silly thing to run from her as though she had caught you doing something disgraceful. That hurried flight might well mortify you, for it could not but lower you a little in the estima-

tion of a girl as sweet and refined as Louise Chadwick. She was compelled to make her call early, and naturally expected to find us busy; but I doubt if she expected to have us run from her in mad haste, forgetting hospitality, and making her feel like an unwelcome intruder."

With this rebuke kindly spoken, Mrs. Robbins started to the door, but turned to add quietly: "True refinement has in it no mixture of false pride. Remember that, Ruth."

Ruth seemed unable just then to remember anything but her hot cheeks and faded dress, and the telltale scrub-bucket. She went out presently to finish the steps and "get the horrid old things out of sight."

How different everything looked! The roses were common things, very unlike the rare *Bon Silenes* and *Meteors* in the Chadwick conservatory. The grass was uneven and rough; there was no landscape-gardener here to keep it smooth as plush. The birds in the orchard made her head ache.

Discontentedly enough she finished the homely task, taking no pleasure in her work, though the old steps did shine as she had predicted, and the shadows of the vines covered them with clean lace work. "It's all well enough to talk about sweet refinement and hospitality. I guess if I

could sit at home in a pretty tea gown, read charming stories and do dainty sewing, I could always feel ready to welcome my guests too. Mamma may talk all she pleases, but work, this sort of rough work, must seem to a girl like Louise, downright degradation."

Ruth was not a very pleasant addition to either dinner or tea table that bright May day. Hattie and Carrie, Willard and John, were all unusually merry, and perhaps hardly noticed how she sat silent and dull through each meal.

It was cool evening when Mrs. Robbins called Ruth to a chair on the old porch, and Ruth, not too smilingly, obeyed her summons, thinking that in all her seventeen years she had never spent so sullen a day. But somehow she couldn't forget the bitter feeling it had given her to have Louise, cool, dainty, leisurely, see her in her work-dress scrubbing the front steps like any ordinary servant. She felt quite sure Louise thought it coarse, humiliating work, and she longed to somehow impress upon her the fact that she, Ruth Robbins, was just as intellectual, as refined, as——

"Ruth," said Mrs. Robbins, interrupting the train of tumultuous thought, "you have not asked why Louise came to see me this morning. Before you came down, we had a little talk over

a matter which we had discussed several times already. I thought perhaps I would better not mention it to you till it was all settled. How would you like a trip to Lake Minnetonka with Mrs. Chadwick and the girls."

Ruth, half breathless, exclaimed incredulously: "Minnetonka! I with the Chadwicks? Why, mamma, how, how could I possibly? What about the money?"

"That is what I waited to have settled before telling you. I was wondering how it could be managed when one day Aunt Mary came in with a beautiful necklace which she meant to give you for your birthday. After I had put it away for safe keeping, I was telling her about Mrs. Chadwick's kind invitation to you, and how eager the girls were to have you go. Louise and Mamie and Jo all like you, Ruth, and I think would enjoy having you with them. Well, Aunt Mary looked sober for a minute. 'Seems too bad the child can't have the trip. She has never been farther away than Hillsdale, and has never seen a lake in her life, much as she loves water. Now if only I could draw my next interest sooner, but it isn't due until——' Then she stopped as though struck with a new thought, and exclaimed, 'Laura, the child doesn't care much for jewelry anyway. That is what I can do, I can

make an exchange. I will take back this necklace and give her a round trip ticket to the lake instead.' And so she managed it. Mr. Garland the jeweler, refunded the money for the necklace. He didn't object to doing it, for Aunt Mary will buy it again as soon as she draws her next interest, and give it to Cousin Lou. I knew you would rather have the trip.

Ruth fairly screamed, clapping her hands and hugging her mother in an ecstasy of delight. "How good Aunt Mary is! And how lovely to have one rich relative!"

If Ruth had one dissatisfied thought during the week that followed, as she remodeled her last summer's dresses and mentally compared them with the fresh ones the Chadwick girls would wear, she didn't breathe that thought aloud; and no happier girl could have been found than she, when on the very first day of June she started with the gay party for Lake Minnetonka.

It did seem a little hard, in spite of the gay prospect, to say good-bye to the dear old house and the home folks in it, but she consoled herself with the thought of the breezy letters she could write them, of the funny sketches she should make, and of the stories she could tell all winter long about her novel experiences in the far-away North.

She had no idea just how novel they were going to prove. She had, of course, expected the rowing and bathing and sailing, and the general good time; but what she had not expected was to hear Mrs. Chadwick say, as she did the very morning after their arrival at the cottage on the lake shore—Ruth wondered at their calling that elegant big house a cottage—“Now, girls, we will manage just as we did last year. Theresa will cook, and we will——”

“Make things hum,” Jo exclaimed, laughing. Immediately the whole family set to work with a vim. Louise and Mamie rushed to the upper bedrooms where they could be heard hurrying to and fro, making beds and straightening things generally. Jo, disappearing, returned with a broom to sweep the lower rooms, and Mrs. Chadwick set about the unpacking, at which the girls were to assist later.

“What am I to do?” asked Ruth, feeling as though she had fallen into a revolution.

“If you’ll be a good little girl I’ll let you dust,” said Jo with a matronly air. “Your time will come. I’m nearly done with this room now. As soon as the breeze dies down you may stir it up again. Here is the duster, and here is a cloth for the corners. I’ll head the procession from room to room. I will be the band-wagon, and

you may be the little boy at the end who waves his hat—only you will wave the dust-cloth."

They made light of it, but Ruth saw that the work was well done, nevertheless, and that they were not inexperienced workers.

The rooms, once thoroughly aired, were attacked spiritedly and left neat as new pins, even to



the flowers in the vases and the folds of the light Madras curtains. There was plenty of time for boating, fishing, and swimming, and for long delightful

tramps through the woods; but the morning's work was done conscientiously first, and without their seeming for an instant to consider

it a hardship or a work to be ashamed of.

Ruth mused over it a good deal. "After all, though," she thought, "this is not really a test. Mamma says no work can lower people unless they feel themselves lowered by it. Now I never felt myself degraded by my work when I just did it before the inmates of my own home. Perhaps if some of their 'swell' friends should

drop in upon them while they are doing such work, they would feel as I did the day Louise called."

It happened that the very next day the "real test," as Ruth called it, came.

It was Friday morning, and sweeping day at the cottage. All the windows were open wide. Mamie, with a dust-cap on her head, was swinging a great rug so hard that her face was aglow with her exertion, and Louise, in the next room, was on her knees washing the tiled hearth. Ruth, from her position in the hall, whither she was moving the drawing-room furniture, could see, coming up from the little dock, young Mr. Leigh and his cousin, Miss Burton, two of the most particularly elegant young people whom they had met that summer. Then she saw Mamie suspend the rug-shaking long enough to nod brightly to them, and finishing it by the time they reached the house, run down and greet them warmly without a thought of her dust-cap or the perspiration bedewing her features.

"This is a busy day for us, you see," she said smilingly. "Let me get you fans, and then, if you'll just sit here on the piazza in the cool, we'll redouble our efforts and join you in a little while. You'll spend the morning? We are so glad to have you."

The other girls too, took time occasionally to send a merry word to the piazza; and when the work was all done they joined the two waiting there as serenely as though they, the daughters of a multi-millionaire, had not been "caught doing menial's work."

"I felt like helping," Miss Burton said smiling, "but Ned would have insisted upon going too, and he would have been a nuisance."

Ruth did some serious thinking that day, and at night had a long girl-talk with Louise after the lights were out, telling her just how good a lesson she had learned, and why she needed it.

"I remember the May morning you speak of, Ruth," Louise returned, "and when you dashed off and left your pail on the front steps, it gave me a real sorry feeling. I hope you don't think now that I could love you any less for seeing you scrub the porch steps in a calico gown. It is not what we do—a girl's a girl for a' that—but it's the spirit with which we do it. I defy any combination of circumstances, or of soap and water, broom or stew-pan, to make me any less a real lady. Nothing can disgrace us that is honest, unless we insist it shall. And Ruth"—in a lower tone—"there is another thought that will glorify any work, whatever it may be. I learned it from the Good Book long ago, and as long as

I remember it there is never any danger that I shall work in the wrong spirit : ‘And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.’ That surely refers to little, homely duties as well as to grand and lofty ones.”

"Oh, Louise," said Ruth, pressing for an instant the hand of her friend, "how little I knew you! and how glad I am that now I know you well enough to try to be more like you, and to learn to work as you do 'In His Name.'"

XI

HOW MISS ELIZABETH FOUND HAPPINESS

WHEN Bessie Carter received that invitation from her mother's old friend, Elizabeth Duncan, she held it high above her head and called jubilantly:

“Girls, girls, it's the chance of my life! She has the dearest old home in the quaintest old city, and her rooms are overflowing with my pet mania and hers, china, the rarest and oldest and loveliest! I shall come back with my notebook crammed; and next year, instead of painting endless orchids in the most modern way, we'll do such Wedgwood and Doulton as our grandmothers treasured. Oh, it seems too good to be true, and I am wildly happy!”

Yet the Bessie Carter speeding to Arrbourne on that June day two weeks later, had lines of thought lengthening her rosy face; the laughing mouth was sobered, and in the frank gray eyes there shone a mist that was near to tears.

Sitting there in the cool rattan chair, a breeze from freshly wet meadows blowing through the car, her mind went back to the stifling heat of the vile alley of the city where, at noon that day, she had threaded her suffocated way with pretty Isabel Talman. She had stood on the steps of the School of Design, after telling the girls good-bye, when Isabel passed, her arms laden with a curious assortment of battered toys, and a bunch of fast-fading flowers.

"In the name of the comical, my pretty maid, where are you going thus arrayed?" she had asked gayly.

But Isabel did not laugh. "I have heard of such a pitiful case in Cook Alley," she said. "I don't know just what it is or how much can be done—a child-invalid, the doctor said—and I'm going over there now to find out what I can of his needs. In the meantime the toys may amuse him, poor thing! and the flowers too, although they are nearly cooked."

Moved by some impulse, Bessie fell into step with the older girl. "You are always doing something kind and good," she said impetuously. "Let me go with you. My train doesn't leave until four, and I have not a thing to do."

She lifted a box from her friend's arm as she spoke, and slipped into the shade of her

friendly umbrella. Half an hour later the two girls found themselves in a room upon the threshold of which Bessie paused aghast, so damp, so foul-smelling, so reeking with filth it was.

"Where is the sick child?" Isabel asked of a drowsing, drunken heap in the corner.

There was no reply until, from a mass of rags almost under foot, a tired little voice said faintly :

"It's me's the sick un, missis. Marm, she's sleepin'."

There the "sick un" lay, a pale and twisted midget with the form of a child of six and a face aged by suffering. Isabel bent for an instant over the pitiful thing, and then raised two flashing, tear-wet eyes to Bessie.

"I could hate Dr. Kent," she said, her soft voice fierce with indignation. "Why isn't this tortured, racked little mortal in a hospital where he can be properly cared for? Dr. Kent has been cruelly neglectful."

"Please 'm," the child protested, "it ain't Dr. Kent's fault, 'deed it ain't. He's been good to me, that doctor has. He did put me there, me'n' a lot of other fellers with hip disease, an' they kep' me there three weeks. I tell you they ain't any place like a horspital fer bein' that res'ful and clean an' makin' you feel like you was somebody else, all new an' made-over."

"But why aren't you there yet?" Miss Talman asked quickly.

The expression of the little old face settled from momentary animation into patient wretchedness again.

"There was other fellers could be cured," he said simply. "They done all they could fer me, an' 'twarn't no use. So I had to make way."

Bessie was in a sort of daze the rest of that visit. In all her busy, happy life she had come across nothing so hopeless, so awful as this. The memory of that pitiful figure, the appealing sadness of those great, pained eyes, changed all the peaceful Arrbourne landscape when, in the golden haze of a quiet sunset, she stepped from the station platform into Miss Duncan's roomy old carriage, and went bowling easily along the smooth and shaded drive.

It was later, after days in which together they had admired and talked over the wonderful cups and trays and vases, that there began to dawn upon Bessie a feeling that all was not well with Miss Elizabeth. There was a restlessness about her which her namesake had never seen before. Generally brisk and independent, she had developed of late a feverish unrest that occasionally found vent in bursts of petulance, or gave way to sudden moods of dull despondency.

"I'm sick of living," she said wearily one sunny morning, depositing upon the table with nervous haste the tall, quaint water-jug whose odd design she had just been displaying.

"Why, Miss Elizabeth!" the girl exclaimed, shocked and startled. "You can't mean that!" and her eyes turned from the listless figure to the open window, beyond which stretched the broad acres owned by this solitary spinster.

There was the well-kept lawn from which sounded the click and whirr of the busy grass-cutter; there were the gardens where bees droned over riotous roses, and where, from beds of mignonette and flaming nasturtiums, soft breezes bore delicious odors into the handsome rooms.

To Bessie, for whom life had held few luxuries, the leisure, the delights of Arrbourne, seemed in themselves enough to make life joyfully well worth living. Yet she remembered hearing Martha, the keen old housekeeper, say, "Miss 'Lizabeth never'll be happy till she thinks more o' some one else than she does o' herself."

Was Miss Elizabeth selfish? And could it be that having given all her life to the following out of her own desires, the swelling of her own bank-account and the increasing of her own lands and property, she was after all poor in happiness and real content?

With unconscious intentness Bessie studied the wrinkled old face, noting for the first time the character of the marks forming about the mouth and eyes, the gradual changing of its once gentle expression to settled hardness and severity. And then a thought took possession of her so suddenly that it leaped half-formed into words.

"That child—oh, Miss Elizabeth, if you only could!"

"Could what?" asked Miss Elizabeth sharply.

The girl flushed, realizing how abrupt she had been. But her wish was none the less fervent when she began warmly: "I wish you could have seen what I saw the day I came to Arrbourne. You never could have dared complain of life if you'd seen the real misery of it endured by that tortured little soul in Cook Alley."

Miss Elizabeth looked interested. "What about it?" she asked.

Then Bessie told the story.

It was not a long story, but the tremble in the girlish voice, the mist in the gray eyes, made it a very real and eloquent one. "And Miss Elizabeth," she concluded, "a scant hundred dollars a year would keep that wretched little mass of filth and suffering in a hospital where he would be clean and cared for."

"I have a good many hundreds a year," said Miss Elizabeth slowly. "Suppose we go into the city in the morning and look up the Cook Alley case."

Bessie's heart gave a great throb.

"Oh, Miss Elizabeth!" she said; and though the lines about Miss Elizabeth's mouth had relaxed but slightly, she hoped with all her soul that the pitiful case of that small incurable might do its own pleading.

It was nine o'clock of a scorching day when the two Elizabeths picked their way through the malodorous alley. The filth of ages seemed to exhale in the steam that rose stifling from the cracks in the battered pavement. Wan and wretched-looking children sat listlessly in doorways or roused themselves long enough to indulge in fierce, momentary squabbles. Bessie hurried along to the dilapidated doorway she remembered, and Miss Elizabeth, choked by the foul air, stepped gingerly after her.

In the dingy room there was little change. The drunken heap of the first visit sat, a stage less drunken, before a table eating a late breakfast whose coarseness turned Miss Elizabeth faint. Swarms of sticky flies, routed from this revolting meal by the flabby hand of the woman, settled upon the moaning little wretch upon the



“Miss Elizabeth stepped gingerly after her.”

floor. Miss Elizabeth looked from one to the other, and held to the doorframe for support.

"You awful—thing!" she ejaculated aghast. "Is that your child?"

"'Twouldn't be if I could help it—groanin' brat!" answered the woman.

Miss Elizabeth gave a gasp. Speech seemed to have deserted her. She looked, as if held by a sort of fascination, at the large and feverishly bright eyes of the child at her feet.

"I'm going to take him," she said at last in a breathless kind of way. "No law would let you keep him."

"No more do I want him," retorted the woman. "Take him an' welcome; he'll die in a few weeks if luck's good."

Miss Elizabeth clenched her hands until every little yellow knuckle stood out wrathfully.

"Run for a cab, Bessie," she clicked, through her set teeth. "I'll watch the child till you get back; but hurry."

Bessie did. In an incredibly short time she was back with a carriage and they were rolling away, the wide-eyed child lying at full length on a seat, his matted head resting on Miss Elizabeth's knee.

"Shall you go to the Children's Hospital?" Bessie asked.

"I shall go there to inquire for a trained nurse; but the child I mean to take home."

Bessie stared blankly. This passed her wildest hopes. She was in a delightful flutter of excited solicitude all the while they transferred their little charge safely from cab to railroad car, and then into Miss Elizabeth's own carriage, and away through the cool shadows of the elm trees to the great house at Arrbourne; and no dainty product of her particular art had ever engrossed her as did the changing of this loathsome little creature, pathetic and helpless, into something that was wholesome and sweet.

During the process Tim—for that was the name he had given—looked from one to the other of his rescuers with the speechless gratitude of some wounded animal, save that now and again a deep-drawn "Thankee, ma'am," came from the depths of his satisfied soul.

Miss Elizabeth bustled about like a solicitous mother bird, excited and cheery. "You shall have a dish of fresh fruit and a bowl of milk toast," she said smiling. "We must see if we can't get some life into that starved little body of yours."

The child turned bright, adoring eyes upon her. He looked almost pretty, his flushed cheek against the white pillow.

"We fellers thought the horspital was the bes' place anywheres," he said, "but, Miss 'Lizbeth, I think heaven must be like this yere place," and he drew a long breath of perfect content, his eyes on the far-away fields and the sunny gardens. Then the old, patient sadness crept into his face. "Do I have to go back when my time's up?" he asked.

"You're going to stay here as long as you live," said Miss Elizabeth softly; and she swallowed something absurdly hard in her throat as she started quite suddenly for the dining room.

"Miss 'Lizbeth ain't been so happy in ten years," said Martha to Bessie half an hour later; and then she stood mute to see little twisted Tim, his face radiant with happiness, eating milk toast from Miss Elizabeth's daintiest Dresden bowl.

XII

JULIA'S HOME MISSION



“WELL, Julia, she is simply fascinating!”

“Isn’t she, though!” Julia exclaimed in answer, her dark head nodding eulogies. “She is quick as a flash, breezy and bright, and she sings and plays just beautifully!”

The last word was smothered to a whisper, for the object of Julia’s enthusiasm returned, bearing a dainty tray of fruit and cake.

She was a charming little creature, indeed, with dancing blue eyes and saucy blonde curls nodding airily over her graceful head. And it

needed but this evidence of her thoughtfulness to completely capture her girl callers; for, as Blanche said afterward, "If there is anything that wins my heart on a scorching August day, it is icy cold oranges and fluffy sponge cake."

So they chattered away, blithe as birds, and laughing little bird-trills over the droll songs Nell sang to the thumping of her silver-mounted banjo.

Julia told the family about her new acquaintance that night at the tea table.

"She is a cute little trick," Sam said, smiling. "I see her down town pretty often, and she looks so rosy and bright that it's a real treat just to look at her."

"Well, for my part," said Hugh bluntly, "I always feel sort o' skittish about these butterfly girls who spend such a precious lot of time on the street."

"Oh, you big young sifter-of-men-and-things, don't moralize over pretty Nell Wayne, now. She is all right—not to speak slangily either. She's just a little sunbeam, that's what she is, and I hope she'll shine around this habitation frequently. They are not very rich, I fancy, and I am glad I can make it pleasant for her. She is as sweet and dainty as can be, but they live in that tiny cottage down Elm Street, just she and

her mother and younger sister, for they have no father."

"Well here, sis, suppose you cut the biography short and pass the rolls," said Sam. "I'm more interested in supper just now than I am in pretty girls. If your sunbeam isn't good gold I'll trust the mother bird and the owl here to find it out, and rescue you and your affections from any unfortunate attachment."

But the sunbeam really seemed to prove "good gold," and to grow more charming daily. One night, after a sparkling visit from her, during which she had seemed more winsome and lovable than ever, Mrs. Kessler was moved to ask, "Is her mother as vivacious as she?"

Julia opened her mouth and closed it again. For a minute the power of speech seemed to have deserted her. Mrs. Kessler waited in some surprise for the answer which came slowly when it did come.

"Why, mother, I've never even seen Mrs. Wayne. The worst of it is that it never occurred to me before that I hadn't. Nell always makes the time so full of sparkle that I hadn't missed the greater light—as, of course, the mother must be," with a smile at the little woman who was certainly "the greater light" in the Kessler household.

The next afternoon at Nell's, Julia took occasion to ask, "Where is your mamma, dear? Do you know I have never met her?"

Nell laughed carelessly. "Oh, mamma's about the house some place. I'll call her presently."

But she didn't, and Julia supposed she had forgotten it. At the gate, in the semi-dusk, she ran against a little, faded-looking person who was hurrying around the side way with a pitcher of milk. "I beg your pardon," she stammered; and the little body replied also, with stress upon the your, "I beg your pardon," and in a moment had disappeared in the kitchen door.

"Well, I wonder who on earth that was," Julia soliloquized, and then forgot all about it until, at tea, a speech of sturdy Hugh's sent a sudden stab of conviction to her heart. She was repeating one of Nell's bright sallies when Hugh interrupted in his uncompromisingly honest fashion:

"I'll tell you why I don't like that pretty little kitten friend of yours; because she hasn't any more conscience than the soulless creatures we liken her to. I couldn't forgive even a butterfly that kept its mother a grub."

"Why, Hugh Kessler, what can you mean?"

"Just what I say, sister mine. She frisks

about town in her charmingly simple gowns and sunshiny smiles while her wornout little mother sews night and day to feed and clothe the family. Have you ever seen her do one useful thing? Answer me that, Julia, honor bright."

But Julia had left the table in tears. Hugh never made statements he couldn't prove, and the blow was too crushing and sudden. Mrs. Kessler found her in her room an hour later, her eyes red from crying.

"To think how I loved that girl!" she wailed. "Why, mother, she must be utterly unprincipled."

"Don't be hasty, little Castor. Pollux may be only thoughtless. Perhaps she is savable, yet."

Julia's eyes flashed. "Well, her mother ought to be, anyway. I'm going there to-morrow, and I'm going to see her mother or die trying. And she shall know what I think of that sort of girl too. Oh, mamma, how can she frolic and sing, with her poor little mother slaving at a machine through the long, hot days? I'd no idea they were as poor as that. Let's do something, mamma. Let's get up a boating party, an informal one, and invite them all, and see if Miss Nell can keep her tired little mother hidden then."

"There, there, Julia, cool down a trifle. You look quite fiery. But the idea really isn't a bad one; and I think I'll call with you to-morrow, as I ought to have done long ago."

So it happened that the next afternoon Nell Wayne, airily twanging her banjo in the little parlor, was surprised to see Mrs. Kessler coming up the walk with Julia.

"Mamma in? Why ye-es. I'll call her."

In another moment the bent little body whom Julia had met in the twilight, hurried in, a half-frightened look on her face, and needles and pins of assorted sizes on the front of her rusty black gown.

"You poor little starved creature!" Julia was commenting inwardly. "To think of my eating iced oranges that your poor, pricked fingers had earned!"

But Mrs. Kessler was talking in her own sweet, sensible way, and gradually chasing some of the tired lines from the worn dressmaker's face.

Pretty Nell's roses were uncomfortably red when she heard the invitation for the following afternoon, and redder still when the mother, with a little gasp of astonishment, said:

"Oh, how I should enjoy it! I used to love the water when I was a girl, but I haven't even

seen it now for months. I don't seem to have the time. If only I could go to-morrow—but——”

“But what?” Mrs. Kessler smiled.

“There is Mrs. Miller's dress to finish, and it will take every minute until dark to-morrow.”

Then it was Julia's turn to vent some of her long-pent indignation, and she did it with an assumption of sweet unconsciousness that would have convulsed her fun-loving brothers.

“Oh, my dear Mrs. Wayne, I'm sure that excuse won't hold a minute. Nell is so quick at anything; she can rush it through for you, I know.”

Mrs. Wayne looked at her daughter in a dazed way, and there was dead silence until Nell herself said with a queer snap in her voice:

“Why, yes; there will be no trouble about the dress. Mamma can go, of course. We'll all enjoy it immensely.”

The dress actually was finished somehow, and the Wayne family made up part of the happy party of the next afternoon. One had only to look at the face and figure of the tired little woman in black, to know that she, for one, certainly was “enjoying it immensely,” as her daughter had predicted. She seemed to freshen as a thirsty blossom might have done in the cool,

sweet air; and the frolicsome breezes and the plunge of the waves brought such color and life and sparkle to her face, that Julia could hardly believe her the careworn creature of the day before. Julia, meantime, was doing, as she afterward affirmed, "more missionary work to the square inch," than she had ever accomplished in all her years of service as president of the Young Ladies' Mission Society.

"Mamma," she said months afterward, "that is one solid comfort about working with home heathen. You know just when you have them. You were right about Nell; it was as much lack of thought as lack of principle, and now she is such a sweet, solid, helpful girl, that I am sure no one could ever accuse her of doing the kitenish rôle, or of eating iced fruits in a cool parlor while her tired little mother snipped dresses all day in a stuffy back room."

XIII

WHAT KITTY FOUND



“**W**ELL, I failed to find her!” Kitty Somers exclaimed, fluttering in like some bright-plumed bird, and bringing a breath of the March wind with her.

“Find what?” Judge Somers asked, looking up smiling, his gold-rimmed glasses

dotting the point at which he had stopped reading.

Mrs. Somers too, glanced up from her sewing, and Anne turned from the sonata she had been practising, to hear what Kitty had to tell.

Kitty meanwhile had dropped into a chair and was leisurely drawing off her long, handsome gloves, ready for a comfortable recital.

“‘Find what,’ papa dear? Why, the sweet, self-sacrificing family bread-winner, who stands pale and tired all day behind a dreary counter, and goes home at night to an invalid mother and seven small sisters whose sole support she is.”

Judge Somers laughed. Kitty’s drollery, her little egotisms, her habit of broadly generalizing all things, great and small, rather amused him, and he was nothing loth to draw her on.

“Do you mean to tell me you have actually been hunting the heroine of the story papers?”

“That I have, papa-judge, and I trust that if she exists, she is no more tired than I, after her day’s exertion.”

“How did you go about it?” Cousin Ruth asked, stepping across from the library where she had been apparently absorbed in her book.

“Well, pretty much as I’d go about hunting a nice quality of lace or linen——”

“And that,” interrupted Anne, “would be by sailing in with your aristocratic little nose turned high above such paltry things as lace or linen counters, and by saying loftily, ‘So much of your finest so-and-so.’”

"Nonsense!" Kitty retorted. "As I began to say, I engaged in the chase with only my keen observation and wary catechising to help me out."

"I'd have liked to see you. I can picture you demanding sternly, 'Do you buy all your mother's clothes and pay the doctor's bill for a crippled brother?' or 'Did you go without underwear all winter that your poor old grandfather might have a new coat?'"

"Now, see here, Anne, I'll have no light treatment of this serious subject. You know I have too much tact to ask any such idiotic questions. No, my object was veiled. The pursued supposed in each case that I had come to hunt a certain impossible shade of China silk."

Here Kitty laughed so ruefully that there followed a chorus of "Well, what's the fun?"

"The not-at-all funny part was that I secured the impossible (?) shade to my utter astonishment, and then had to buy it or look like a goose."

"That was a case of the catcher caught," Anne said, laughing. "Let us see the purchase. You ought to be glad you have something to show for your day's work," and then as Kitty unfurled a cloud of diaphanous silk, she exclaimed delightedly: "Oh, Kitty, it is what I

have been pining for to drape my white-and-gold shelf. Sell out to me, will you? What did it cost?"

"Seventy a yard."

"Only seventy cents? How much have you there? Two yards? But, Kitty, I need four."

"Well, dear, don't look so distressed. I'll go down Monday after school and get you the rest. I know the very counter at which I bought it."

Then as the tea-bell tinkled, shop-girls and silk were forgotten, and to Cousin Ruth's serious question, "What manner of girls did you find?" Kitty only answered abstractedly, "Giddy things who talked slang across the aisles to each other and forgot what I had asked for."

On Monday afternoon Kitty was back at a down-town silk counter asking one of the "giddy things" for "goods to match this."

"Yes'm; a dollar a yard. How much?"

"Two yards only. A dollar a yard, did you say? Isn't this the same as the silk I bought Saturday at seventy cents?"

The slender shop-girl, about Kitty's own age, looked at her a moment scrutinizingly. "Yes'm, now I remember that you are the same lady. I am very sorry. It was my mistake. See, I'll show you the mark on the board. I got it mixed in my mind with another quality."

"What happens when you make that kind of mistake?" Kitty asked curiously.

"We pay for it," the girl said simply.

"Do you mean to say that you had to pay the sixty cents I didn't pay on those two yards of silk?"

"Yes, miss."

"For goodness' sake!" Then suddenly, "I really beg your pardon, but would you mind telling me what salary your position commands? Er—how much do you make a week?"

"Three dollars."

Kitty gasped. She often spent that much on a pair of gloves or an afternoon's pleasuring.

"Then you received but two-forty for last week?"

The girl nodded.

"And——" Kitty stopped. She was tempted to ask as Anne would have suggested, "Do you support yourself and a sick mother?" but while she hesitated the girl said cheerfully: "You see, I could stand it much better than most of them,"—with a nod toward girls at other counters—"for I only have to buy clothes. Father would never let me pay a cent of board, although there are so many of us for one poor man to feed."

She handed Kitty the silk as she spoke, and Kitty, feeling herself dismissed, suddenly made

a remark that startled herself almost as much as it did her hearer.

"I want awfully to talk with you. When do you go home?"

"At five, to-night. It's my early night."

"Do you walk?"

"Yes'm; it's only ten blocks."

"Then may I walk with you?"

"Why—why, yes'm, if you want to."

"I want to very much," Kitty said earnestly, "and I'll be here at five."

Then she went to the waiting room and sat in a brown study for ten long minutes. "I know what Cousin Ruth thought that night—that perhaps if I had to change places with the slangy shop-girl for a day, I would have more sympathy for her. Perhaps I would. At any rate I would like to learn more about the species from this poor child who paid some of her next dress perhaps, on my China silk."

So at five o'clock Miss Kitty, in her tailor-made garb, was stepping briskly along back streets beside the shop-girl in her shabby jacket.

Though she had said it with a touch of vanity, Kitty had spoken truly when she reminded Anne that tact was one of her undisputed possessions. Tactfulness she certainly had, and a good, warm heart; and since she meant to be

"impertinent past all bounds," she began by winning the heart of this sweet-faced, sober-gowned girl, in a way in which only a girl very much in earnest could.

"And now that we are friends, the silk all straightened out, and our account square," she said at last, "may I ask you, just as one girl of another, how on earth you do it?"

"Do what? Oh, I see, dress myself and help with Susie on three dollars a week?"

"Susie?"

"My little sister who is in school. Why, I am sure that is not hard. Of course I can't buy the best quality of anything, whether underwear, shoes, or dresses; but it does very well, and it is easy to get along with little when you have to. There is only one thing I want money for."

Kitty thought of twenty things in a minute, all very wide of the mark, as she learned when Agnes—for that was this new acquaintance's name—said gravely, "And that is, to entertain."

"To entertain!" Kitty echoed breathlessly. Of all things she never would have suspected that this Agnes had any social ambitions.

"Yes, to entertain the other girls, and keep them from either freezing these raw evenings in their bare little rooms, or going to cheap shows for want of better amusement."

“Why don’t they go to the reading rooms and public libraries?”

“Half of them can’t read—at least precious little—and most of those places are so big and grand they scare the girls off anyhow. But I know they would come to our house if I could afford a fire in the parlor every night and—and—oh, some way of amusing them, pictures, or music, or something to eat, or anything.”

While she spoke Kitty’s face was brightening.

“I could hug you right here,” she said impulsively. “Of course they would incline to be slangy and rude—no decent advantages—starved positively—no joke. I would starve physically as well as morally on three dollars a week, and—such a place for my tithes! See here, Agnes”—suddenly facing the bewildered girl beside her—“do you know that for months I have been setting aside a tenth of my allowance for the Lord’s work, and it has just stayed there in a corner of my drawer waiting for its work? Let us go partners. You find the girls, and I will furnish the capital; enough money for fuel and light, new, bright books to read aloud, games to play, and fruit to eat, and—oh, if you’ll let me in, Thomas shall drive me there sometimes, and I’ll bring my mandolin or banjo, and—there’s no end to the things we can do.”

Agnes, if bewildered before, looked radiantly glad now, her intelligent face lighting up until it was positively beautiful.

"It will make Sallie and Sadie and Jen over new," she said.

The people who from Kitty's luxurious home watched the developments, thought that Kitty, of all the rest, was most entirely "made over new."

"If she did not find the exact type of shop-girl for which she searched," Cousin Ruth said gently, "she did find her way to the real life of some not-too-kindly-judged folk, and in trying to 'lend a hand' to them, has lent new grace and charm to her own spirit."

XIV

PINK AND GRAY

THEY were discussing new fall gowns and bonnets when Colonel Bradwood, whom they had thought asleep in his big chair by the fire, suddenly turned toward them. The colonel was always a stately, handsome figure, but to-day he looked more attractive than ever with the warm gleam of the firelight on his iron-gray hair, and the twinkle of fun in his deep-set eyes.

“Plum-color or black? Gray-blue or gold-brown? How hard a question it is!” he said with one hand on Haddie’s soft curls as she sat on the rug near his feet. “But, girls, put away this study of plumage for a minute, and let me tell you a color story, and a true one at that.”

With little exclamations the girls drew up rockers and ottomans and swarmed about his chair. At the same moment the colonel started toward the door. A wail of disappointment arose from the girls.

"Is that the way you tell stories? Rouse us to eagerness, and then run away?"

Colonel Bradford laughed. "Did I say 'tell a story'? I meant to read one," he said good-naturedly, "but a true one nevertheless." In a moment he had crossed to his study and returned with a packet of letters. "I said a color story, girls, and I think we will name it 'Pink and Gray.' To begin in the good, old-fashioned way:

"Once upon a time there were two girls——"

"I am glad they are girls," said Anna; but Jennie's soft fingers over her mouth prevented further interruption, and the colonel continued:

"Two very sweet, good girls who had worked pretty hard most of their lives and had had very little pleasure. Finally it was possible for them to take an entire summer's outing, and everybody rejoiced for them and thought what a fine time they would have and how much good it would do them. They were sisters, you know——had I told you that?—and both good, true girls, and yet one was a rose-maiden, and the other a—a——"

"A gray, droopy blossom like those forlorn, weedy things that grow on the road to Prior-dale. Have I guessed?" Clara exclaimed eagerly, her thoughtful face aglow with the idea she had caught of the colonel's color story.

"Guessed exactly!" said the colonel; "and now I shall let May and Theodora tell their own stories in these letters which I hold. Whose are they? How did I get them? How dare I read them? No wonder you ask, little Miss Honor-bright, and yet I am afraid you must be content with knowing that the letters came honorably into my possession, and that these two unusual girls are willing to have me use them——"

"To point a moral and adorn a tale?"

"Yes, again."

"Then," said Haddie, clapping her hands delightedly, "I know how and why it was possible for them to have this happy summer. You are a fairy godfather, colonel, and you made them believe they could pay for it all by writing it up for you——"

"What a dreamer of dreams!" said the colonel, laughing so heartily that his very spectacles seemed to twinkle. "Never mind the why and wherefore. Just listen, and see that you 'pay for it all' by finding the moral hidden under this pink and gray," and drawing forth folds of neatly written sheets, he began:

LAKE LINDEN, July 10, 1890.

MY DEAR ——:

We have been here a month now, but it seems so much longer. People talk about this glorious

Minnesota climate, but I cannot say that I find much to commend in it. It is either uncomfortably warm, with the wind blowing such a gale that one must scream to be heard, or it is cloudy and cold and disagreeable.

The people with whom we board have a small cottage where there is a fireplace in the dining room, and also in the kitchen; but we all sleep in tents. Such sleeping! One never knows but that one may wake up in a storm and find the tent flapping like a huge balloon; and there are apt to be gartersnakes in one's shoes occasionally, and bugs and spiders crawling over everything. It is enough to give one the horrors.

Yesterday we went sailing. Mr. McGregor invited us, and there were eight in the party. It was dreadfully rough, and I confess there wasn't much pleasure for me in lurching about from one side of the boat to the other, and never feeling sure that I could stay in my seat. The sun on the water was blinding, and we seemed to get yards of extra glare from the big, white sail. Some of the crowd told funny stories on the way, but there wasn't much point to most of them, and I thought it rather tiresome. The trip was very long—away up to the other end of the lake. There we climbed out with some difficulty, and walked awhile, getting our shoes full of sand and our clothes covered with horrid little burrs. I found some beautiful flowers, but they wilted so soon that I was sorry I had bothered to get them.

We ate lunch under a big oak tree, and though

I was very hungry, the little red ants got into the food so dreadfully that there was no enjoying anything.

We went back to the boat by another way, and had to cross a little stream on a log. It was horribly slippery, and half of us got our feet more or less wet by losing our balance. Wasn't that disagreeable?

We didn't get back until late in the afternoon, and I was tired to death.

Theodora says she is going to write you, so I guess I will stop. Hope she will not tell you just what I have. I have gained eight pounds, but it isn't very becoming, and I am dreadfully freckled.

Your affectionate friend,
MAY.

"Dear me!" Anna exclaimed with a sigh, as the colonel drew forth a second letter; and there was a sort of tired settling into chairs as though the gray missive had weighed unpleasantly upon them.

"This is Theodora's, written the same afternoon," said the colonel:

YOU DEAR ——!

As May has not written before, and must have had lots of "way back" things to tell you, I will make it my business just to let you know about the glorious sail we had yesterday afternoon.

It was a perfect day for it, the lake as blue as

the sky, the waves dashing, all a-sparkle, against the boat-dock, and a fine breeze blowing. Wasn't Mr. McGregor a dear to ask us? He is such a splendid sailor that we were not a bit afraid. We had to tack all the way to the upper end of the lake, and when he cried "Hard-a-port," we ducked our heads while the boom swung over us. Sometimes we were away up until we had to brace our feet against the center-board to keep from sliding right out of our seats, and at other times we were down so near the water that we could splash our hands in it; and on the return trip, I kept my lovely ferns fresh by dipping them in this way as we cut through the saucy waves.

Everything had been planned in the loveliest way for us, even to a dear little lunch, which we ate in a cool, grassy place up in Sunset Hollow. You don't know how good everything tastes out in the open air, anyway. Even the bugs were hungry (I couldn't blame them), and once, as fat little Bobby Hinde was taking in a big mouthful, everybody yelled, and he had to stop until some one plucked a huge "grand-daddy-long-legs" from his bread and butter. Oh, I had such an appetite! I have gained ten whole pounds in just a month. Mrs. Gale says they will call me little Moon-face pretty soon, but I'm sure the old man in the moon never was so brown as I, even if he does wear nearly as broad a smile.

I forgot to tell you what fun we had landing. It was so shallow we couldn't get within two

yards of the shore, so Mr. McGregor ran up alongside a huge boulder, and Mr. Vincent jumped out upon this to help us. Then we girls, climbing up beside the mast, gained the shore in two flying leaps. When my turn came, I reached the boulder all right, but on the



second jump I went splash into the water!

I scared a green frog nearly into fits, and wet my feet thoroughly; but the wind dries things out in a jiffy up here, and nobody minds a ducking in the least. I got another one going back—slipped into a stream from a mossy tree—but I would rather be half drowned than to have missed seeing as pretty a thing as that fern-fringed stream. It was an afternoon long to be remembered, and I often think what a pleasure it will be to tell it all over to the dear folks at home.

Now I must run and help Mrs. Gale make the cookies for tea. I have ever so much to tell you, and will write again soon. Your loving

THEODORA.

"Why, it is almost like a story!" Haddie exclaimed. "Do read another one of Theodora's."

The colonel, smilingly, drew out other folded pages.

MY DEAR GOOD —:

How can I ever tell you what royally good times we are having! It is all like a beautiful dream. Last night we sat around a glowing fire in the cottage, and told stories and acted charades while the wind howled and the rain dashed outside. Then at bedtime, such fun as it was, covered with our big shawls, to race across from the cottage to our old tent door; and later, to lie snug and cozy under our gray blankets, while the oak leaves scraped and the rain beat against our tent roof. One feels always so safe and warm to hear the storm so close all around, and yet to be snugly sheltered from it. The way one does sleep up here! Every morning I truly feel as though I had been made over new, and I spring up with a bound and hurry to dress, that I may be able to row across the lake to an old farmhouse, where we get the richest, freshest milk for breakfast.

Rowing is such fun! Mrs. Gale thinks I row as well as the boys. I know that is hardly true, though I am sure I love it as well.

Every minute is crammed full of good times. If it is cold or stormy we stay indoors and enjoy the bonny fire, making silky pompons of our

silver-lined milkweed pods, or reading beautiful things aloud to each other. When the sun shines, there are simply mines of treasure on all sides. Pretty shaded walks, dear little coves to explore, bathing, fishing, tennis—why, I never in my life knew anything like it!”

I must tell you about our berrying expedition this morning. Five of us in two boats rowed down to the lower end of the lake, singing and laughing all the way.

We left our boats on the pretty, sandy beach and started, Indian fashion, through the woods, along a little path that was so cool and sweet it made me think of the path we read about in “Adam Bede” the other day: “A narrow, hollow-shaped, earthy path, edged with faint dashes of delicate moss—a path which looked as if made by the free will of the trees and underwood moving reverently aside to look at some tall queen of white-footed nymphs.” Isn’t that pretty?

Then we came out into an open space and slipped, one by one, down a rough way into a long hollow where once an old railroad ran. Only the deserted ties and an occasional rusty rail were left to tell the tale, and these were tucked tenderly in under long, pale grasses and delicate wild flowers until they were like the babes in the wood that the robins buried. All along the sides trailed ferns and slender vines, and where the sunlight lay warmest, sifted through the oak trees overhead, ripe, red berries gleamed among their leaves.

We have berries at home, but never did berries taste like these, with their wild, sweet flavor that only the sun and this clear air can give. And to pick them ourselves, fresh and luscious and sweet! Can you imagine how we enjoyed it? how each new one was a new surprise? how we ate and ate, and filled our pails and baskets? and how we came home at noon with seven quarts for astonished Mrs. Gale? Oh, I can't tell it all! If you could just be here to see and enjoy it yourself! I wish every tired, or sick or sad girl I know could be here to share it.

Now we are going in bathing, and if there is anything lovelier than berrying and sailing, it is splashing about in those big, green waves on as breezy a day as this.

How can I ever thank you ——

“Er—ahem—a ——”

Your loving friend,

THEODORA.

The colonel's benevolent face was warm as he finished, and Haddie laughed: “I told you so! The fairy godfather did have something to do with this summer story.”

But the colonel, with a “Tut, tut! Don't jump at conclusions, child,” opened a fourth letter.

MY DEAR SIR :

My apologies ought to precede my letter, for I cannot write presentably with my hand all cramped and blistered from rowing. For my part, I can't see what pleasure ——

“Oh, colonel, it's that gray girl again! Please don't read it! It will spoil all the sunshine of the other,” Anna pleaded.

“We can guess it, anyhow,” Clara said. “Went berrying—dreadfully long walk—sun hot—bushes thorny—ate too much—got sick ——”

“Hear, hear!” cried the others in chorus. “If it isn't as like her as can be!”

“Do you appreciate the superiority of pink over gray, young women?” the colonel asked, smiling, though grave withal.

“I should say so!” Jennie answered. “No fairy godfather living would ever want to shower blessings again upon such a fog-maiden as that fretful May.”

“As a matter of policy then——” the colonel began, pretending dullness; but he was promptly pounced upon and smothered to silence by impulsive little Haddie, while Anna, taking the part of spokeswoman for the crowd, expressed their thanks for the color story, and added seriously :

"We do see the moral, dear Colonel Bradwood, and I think I know four girls at least who will try to make over their winter tempers with more pink and less gray. Do you remember what grandma used to remind us, 'A merry heart doeth good like a medicine'?"

XV

“DOERS OF THE WORD”

THE senior class of the Lowood High School was holding an indignation meeting in the little class-room, which was its own particular sanctum. Everybody talked at the same time, and everybody was angry.

“It takes all the life out of the calisthenics.”

“The singing simply isn’t fit to listen to.”

“If they had to cut down expenses, they might have done it in some other way,” Pauline Boehm said indignantly.

“I should say so!” Jean Russell acquiesced. “From time immemorial they have kept a piano for the main room, and to think that now, our year, the crowning time, they must cart it off, and rant about expenses. Makes me frantic!”

“Our exercises will be tame to deadness,” Mark Pettie lamented. “Oh, if only I had been earning money all summer instead of working on my old, conditioned astronomy. For thirty

dollars we could rent a piano, and a good one, until the end of the year."

Thirty dollars! At those words there was a sudden hush, and girls and boys stood looking at each other as if struck simultaneously with the same idea. At last Harriet Erskine said:

"Of course with all the extra expenses of our graduating year, and with but six of us in the class, we couldn't afford to rent a piano for the school, but——"

"The prize."

"Yes, the prize; the very amount needed."

"Thirty beautiful dollars. What a brick old Mr. Ansdell was to offer it!"

"Then let's call it a go," Frank Hatherell said heartily. "Of course we are all thinking of the same thing. Whoever wins the prize in the great and only contest on the twenty-second shall use the money for the general good, a large-hearted philanthropist whom we shall bless all the rest of the year."

"Agreed! Agreed!" was the general response; yet one tongue was silent, for Emily Wyllie sat with lips tightly compressed and eyes averted.

"Aren't you in it?" Frank asked, turning to her with a laugh.

"No, I am not," the girl answered positively. "If I win the prize I propose to use it as I

please, and not feel bound by any promise to rent a piano 'for the general good,' as you call it. I'll let the rest of you make the grand denials. I wasn't cut out for a philanthropist," and so saying she walked hastily into the large room.

"You needn't have told us that," Jean snapped after her retreating figure. "What you were cut out for nobody knows, unless for a narrow-minded, vain, selfish egotist."

"'Sh," Pauline remonstrated gently.

"Well, it's true anyhow," Harriet declared. "She is vain and selfish and small spirited. I'll venture to say she has decided to spend the money for extra laces, or some sort of nonsense for her graduating dress."

"No doubt—if she gets it, which may kind Providence help us to prevent," Jean said with such fervor that it made the others laugh.

"I don't care," Jean continued; "I am not malicious or spiteful generally, but I heartily hope she will not come within sight of that prize. I would rather you, Mark, who don't even pretend to go through 'The Psalm of Life' without quaking, should win it, than she with all her elocution and self-possession."

"But her elocution and self-possession are the rub," Mark said good-naturedly doleful. "With

those strong qualities she is more apt to walk off with the treasure than any of us, timid, shrinking, gifted creatures that we are."

"Only one thing could upset her," Harriet said with a sudden smile; "something amiss with her toilet. If her dress should not fit, her sash come untied, or a button snap from her shoe or glove—any such catastrophe would give the rest of us a chance."

"Then may the catastrophe arrive as surely as the audience," Jean said ardently. "In the meantime let us work as we never worked before, to come out ahead in the contest. We have a double object now—the piano for this poor, despairing school, and the satisfaction of making that girl's selfishness avail nothing."

They did work, as they felt contestants never worked before. They put in hours after school training their voices to reach to the farthest corner of the empty hall. Before their mirrors, or the critical eyes of teachers and classmates, they labored with "natural positions" and "easy gestures," which somehow refused to be either natural or easy. And, until hoarseness or physical exhaustion drove them from the field, they anxiously repeated line upon line, page upon page, their souls intent upon pauses, inflection, articulation, and expression.

Meantime Emily Wyllie was systematically snubbed, and the more vehemently as the conviction grew upon them all that her oration really would surpass all her former efforts, and, worse still, all their own.

At last the great date came, and all thoughts were centered upon the annual oratorical contest of the senior class. By half-past seven the great hall was filled; at eight there was not standing room. Lights blazed, programmes fluttered, and the breath of flowers scented all the air.

One by one the contestants appeared upon the broad platform, until four of the six had finished and retired amid the applause of the audience. The orchestra, composed of some of the school-boys musically inclined, was valiantly struggling with a difficult selection, and by reference to the programme the audience knew that following this, Emily Wyllie, the acknowledged elocutionist of the class, would deliver her oration, "A Voice from the Heights."

Back of the scenes the six contestants paced the plank floor excitedly, or sat for brief snatches of rest upon rolls of baize floor covering.

"If only her dress would split at one of the darts," Jean whispered to Harriet. "It is tight enough to fly into a hundred pieces. Silly thing, to squeeze herself up like that!"

Emily walked the floor, her head held high, one hand carefully guarding her airy gown from the dust and jagged corners of the wings. The music stopped. Emily started, but dropped her fan. In stooping to pick it up, the hem of her skirt caught upon one of the very jagged points she had been so watchfully avoiding.

There was an ominous slitting, ripping sound, and the hem, torn well around, trailed upon the floor.

Jean and Harriet looked on aghast, feeling almost as though the strength of their wishes had brought them to pass.

For a moment Emily's face was white with consternation and alarm. Then she gathered up the unsightly thing trailing in the dust to one side, and asked wildly of one and another: "Help me, quick! Have you a pin, or you, or you? I need a dozen."

"The house is waiting," called Prof. Vonnoh impatiently.

Emily burst into tears. "I may as well give up now," she sobbed; "I never can go out like this. And I believe you are all glad. You know you hate me."

Nobody spoke.

"Come, hurry, Miss Wyllie!" called the professor, who could not understand the delay.

Harriet was slipping nervous fingers along the hem of her basque searching for pins, but none were there. "She doesn't deserve it, girls, but we ought to help her. This is un-christian. Hasn't some one a pin?"

But "Sunday clothes" carry few such accommodations. One pin was at last secured, and Harriet bent down and attempted to make it answer, but without success. A dozen, indeed, would have been none too many.

Jean, meanwhile, had been struck by a sudden thought. She and Emily were the only girls in white; they were the same size; both their gowns were made empire style, with short waists and flowing skirts. She stood undecided. Help that hateful, selfish thing? Never! She might get out of the scrape as best she could. Then, like a flash, she remembered the sermon on brotherly love she had heard the Sunday before; how, coming from church, she had complained that though Mr. Renfro's sermons were fine they hadn't much influence after all; and how Tom, her blunt, big brother, had said sententiously, "Because you don't try to live up to them. 'Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only.'" Aye, that was was it. "Be ye kindly affectioned one to another," and "doers of the word."

With her saucy face unusually gentle, she

hurried to the frantic girl who stood holding up her gown, and said decidedly, "Here, I will manage it! Frank, go quickly and tell Professor Vonnoh how things are. Say that I will come next instead of Miss Wyllie. And you, Emily, bathe your eyes and pull yourself together. Then slip off your skirt and be all ready

to put mine on the minute I return. Do you understand?"



The announcement had been made, and Jean was off before Emily had quite comprehended what she meant. It dawned upon her swiftly however, and new hope

lighted up her handsome eyes. When Jean returned she was ready and waiting, and the exchange was quickly made.

People said that Emily Wyllie never had done so well before, that she seemed unconscious of everything save the burning story of her "Voice from the Heights." They had all done well,

Jean Russel in particular, but to Emily Wyllie the judges accorded the honor of surpassing all rivals, and in her shapely hand the three gold eagles were placed during hearty applause.

The other participants in the oratorical contest went home rather quietly. "Good-bye to hope," Pauline said with a kind of dreary patience. "No music this year. Calisthenics by count, and songs just anyhow. And we might so easily have won the day!"

"It did seem like a providence," Frank said ruefully, "just the sort of accident we had thought of and just in the nick of time."

"And Jean, of all people, to have gone to the rescue! Jean, you would have had that prize yourself if you had held on to your rights and your dress skirt."

"After all," Jean said triumphantly, "aren't you every one glad? A prize won so unfairly could never have satisfied one of us. She was justly entitled to it, of course, and I am glad she had as fair a chance as any of us."

So the matter dropped; and so, by the time the happy spring vacation had passed and the next term began, it was nearly forgotten. On the second morning however, as the students, singly and in groups, mounted the stairs, they all stopped, delighted, about an object near the door.

Jean Russel, pushing her way through the crowd, stared amazed.

It was a piano, and a beautiful one !

She hurried to the class-room where she found the others gathered. The news was no news to them evidently, for they were all discussing it at once.

"So you were 'in it' after all?" Frank Hatherell was saying to Emily Wyllie; and Emily, though her face shone, said very little.

"I had meant to add that money to the sum papa promised for my commencement dress," she said to Jean in confidence that noon; "but somehow, when I stood there that night, feeling how you all despised me, it dawned upon me that the respect and love of friends might, after all, amount to more than pretty clothes. I was determined to win, to show you all that I could be generous too. I had heard sermons all my life against worldly-mindedness, selfishness, and vanity, and I resolved then and there to be——"

"A doer of the word, not a hearer only?"

"Exactly," Emily assented.

So the High School had music to the close of the year, and there was sweeter music in the hearts of these two who had honestly tried to be "doers of the word."

XVI

TO SERVE OR TO BE SERVED

RA T-A-T A T-T A T, went somebody's knuckles against the panel of Mary's door, but Mary only rolled over sleepily, prepared for another nap.

"Mame! Mame!" Johnnie's impatient voice sounded. "Aren't you going to get up to-day? I have knocked four times."

"All right," replied Mary, with sleepy cheerfulness. "Much obliged to you for calling me."

Then as Johnnie went off grumbling, she stretched her young limbs luxuriously under the soft covers, and thought how delicious it was that it was Saturday morning, with no school to go to and no rush over breakfast and books. To be sure, cook in the kitchen would be angry over her delayed breakfast, and mother would scold a little, but Mary knew how easily she could pacify them both. She actually laughed with the sudden comfortable reflection that nobody could be angry with her long, and

that it was a delightfully happy faculty, that of being able to twist people around one's finger.

"It pays much better," she ruminated pleasantly, "to be sweet and good-tempered. The girls all wonder how I happen to have things my own way always, and to do as I please, and get what I want, when it is all just because I know how to manage folks and not lose my temper."

A little smile of conscious superiority flitted across her dimpled face. "All the people I know rush around to do things for me. They really seem to think it the natural thing to do. If I want a book, Johnnie gets it. If my jacket is dusty, grandma brushes it. If my schoolbag is heavy, Sue carries it. They are all my dear slaves, little and big—bless 'em!" and Mary laughed again, yawning drowsily and burrowing her yellow head into the soft pillow.

"Ma-ry," called Mrs. Wadsworth from the foot of the stairs.

"Yes'm, I'm coming," and Mary jumped up with alacrity, ran swiftly to the pretty, open fire Johnnie had built in her grate and, catching up her boots, knocked their little heels together to shake off the dust. She dressed rapidly then, and in fifteen minutes was down in the dining room.

Breakfast was over and the family gone. Jane, in the kitchen, gave noisy evidence of her displeasure, as she brought in the warm plate and dishes from the heater. She had lost time which she could not make up all day; but Mary, rosy and smiling, greeted her so genially and met her complaints with such gay good humor, that the long-suffering servant ceased to scold, and even browned her cakes with unusual care.

It was a leisurely, comfortable breakfast, and at its conclusion Mary sought her mother, who was busily sweeping the double parlors.

"Run upstairs, please, Mary, will you?" that mother said, "and help Bessie with the beds. Air them thoroughly, but be as quick as you can. There is so much to be done this morning."

"Yes, ma'am. All right," and Mary mounted the stairs again, pausing on the landing to look through the small window and notice what a beautiful, clear, bright day it was. "Too pretty to stay indoors," was her mental comment; and bed-making seemed so distasteful that, upon reaching the room where Bessie was shaking blankets and sorting clean sheets, she exclaimed: "Well, Bess, let's strike a bargain. You hustle around and do this work real quick, and I will

press that brown serge you have been worrying over."

"Well," answered Bessie, though somewhat ruefully, for she knew how much the better of the bargain Mary was getting. But she had dreaded ironing the serge, fearing she could not do it nicely, so she worked willingly after Mary had gone down with the armful of goods.

"Jane, you love your Mary, don't you?" the pretty lips above the brown serge drawled whimsically. "I don't know how to press this stuff decently; so you do it, and I'll wash your dishes and tell you funny stories, there's a dear!"

And cook was finally persuaded.

The funny stories were very funny indeed, and it was not until Mary had vanished triumphantly upstairs with the neatly-pressed dress goods that Jane, tired and heated, discovered the dishes standing just as she had left them, with the exception of a few knives and glasses that the girl had made a feint of washing.

"And yet I s'pose I'd be fool enough to be caught again the same way to-morrow," she sighed, as she put away the irons and started toward her dish-pan.

Mary, in the meantime, having reached the head of the stairs, was sure she heard wheels stopping, and ran to the front window to see.

There were the Boughtons, the whole family, in a large carryall, starting for the woods. She disposed of the serge in a hurry and ran downstairs. Her mother, in dust-cap and apron, stood on the steps; and she heard Mrs. Boughton say:

"We did not decide to go until this morning. Don't mind anything. Come just as you are. We have plenty of lunch for us all—had it in the house, fortunately."

But Mrs. Wadsworth shook her head. "It is a great temptation," she said wistfully. "I haven't had a day in the woods for years. But I really cannot go. There is extra cake to bake, and the library windows to wash, and Johnnie's trousers to mend, and the geraniums to get indoors for the winter, and—oh, so many things that cannot possibly be put off."

"So sorry," they all said; and then Della Boughton called, "Oh, Mame! can't you come? Do say she may, Mrs. Wadsworth."

Mrs. Wadsworth looked from Mary to their friends.

"We should like very much to have her," Mrs. Boughton said warmly.

"Oh, mamma, please let me go," pleaded Mary. "I was just wild to get out! If you will only say yes, I will do every bit of that big basket of darning when I get back."

"It is such a busy day," sighed Mrs. Wadsworth; "but there, dear—yes, you may go."

So Mary, in a transport of delight, hugged her mother gayly, ran for her cap and jacket, and was soon spinning away down the road.

Such a long, happy day it was, with never a thought of the overworked folks at home to mar it. At night when she returned, tired but smiling, Bess had done the darning, and she had only to rest in the easiest chair in the library, and read her Sunday-school book.

"What a lovely world it is, and what good times I have in it," she sighed contentedly.

All the next day she could not forget how lucky it was to be born pretty and winsome, with the sort of tact that made each day a little easier than the day before. That night she went to the Christian Endeavor meeting, and just before her on the blackboard, were the words of the evening's text, from Matthew 20 : 28 :

"Not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

She had heard that text dozens of times before, and she had never thought much more about it than she thought now, which was very little. But during the hour a visitor rose to speak to them, a minister she imagined him to be, a white-haired man with a kind, strong face, and glowing, earnest eyes.

Mary did not hear much of what he said. She was interested in the way the color flushed to his cheeks as he grew more and more earnest, and in wondering whether, when she grew old, her cheeks too would be rosy, and everybody as glad as now to have her about, and to do nice little things for her.

“And instead of following the example and command of our blessed Saviour”—somehow the words penetrated through all her easy indifference, and she began to listen—“we go about trying not to minister, but to be ministered unto. Our daily thought is not, ‘What may I do for others that the world may be better, brighter, happier for my living in it?’ but, ‘What service can I contrive that others shall do for me, that my lot may be easy and my way smooth?’”

“Like the mother of Zebedee’s children, we ask for the high places in the kingdom. We want power, and honor, and wealth—and why? That we may use these gifts for the uplifting and comforting of Christ’s suffering ones? Nay, more often that we may enjoy comforts and luxuries ourselves, and that we may command servants and friends, and be the more continually ministered unto. God help us to realize that whosoever would be chiefest must be servant of

all ; that real grandeur of character comes only with the loving service that throws all selfishness aside ; and that to be truly Christian we must follow humbly in the footsteps of that meek and lowly one who, though the Son of the living God, came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mary hardly knew why the words had touched her so deeply, why there were tears in her eyes, and why, in a single instant, the tact and good nature and executive ability with which she had complacently credited herself, changed to the ugly traits, deceit and indolence and selfishness.

She went from the meeting to the church service in a kind of dream, which was really a most abrupt awakening ; and there listened to a sermon whose every word seemed to condemn the glaring selfishness of her daily living, and to point so directly to her individual self that she wondered all eyes were not centered upon her burning face.

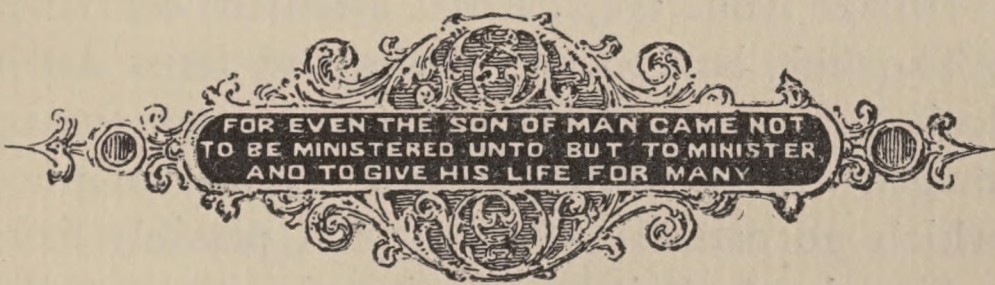
Once home she bolted her door and dropped upon her knees ; but she could hardly pray. Her very prayers, as she remembered them now, had been vain and self-satisfied, mere wicked petitions for such things as should add to her own pleasures and lessen her own cares. Con-

trite and ashamed, she could only cry, with wet cheeks :

“Dear Lord, help me to start all over. Help me to minister, to minister, and not to strive only to be ministered unto.”

If Mary was surprised at the sudden light in which she had seen her own character, her family and friends were treated to a series of surprises that only ended when they grew familiar with the idea that Mary was the one person always ready to help every one, and to change her own plans and forego her own pleasures that she might plan for and please other people.

On the wall in her room hung an illuminated text to which, in her fights with self, she often ran for courage ; and in those simple words lay the keynote of her strength :



XVII

A HAPPY CHANGE

ADAH gave an airy touch to the rose bowl whose trailing treasure swept the mirror below, straightened a pretty doyley or two, and stepped back a pace to catch the effect, half closing her eyes and tipping her head critically, as an artist might in viewing his painting.

"I think it is as dainty and artistic as possible!" she said half exultantly. "I do think that in the arrangement of pretty luncheons I am a success."

"That you are," Rose assented cordially. "The table is a poem. Roses and ferns never looked prettier; and those at the plates are arranged with a sort of loose carelessness and grace which no one else, Adah, could possibly have achieved. Isn't it nearly time for them to be here?"

Adah took a swift peep at her watch. "Ten-thirty. They were to come at eleven, to allow

plenty of time for the drive. Graham will have the landau ready at exactly twelve."

"It is such a charming day!" rippled Rose, her eyes dancing. "Holidays are delightful, even if they are only 'trumped-up, local affairs,' as Professor Wilton so loftily pronounced this one."

"Professor Wilton had to show his disgust in some way, at the popular pressure that compelled him to grant his long-suffering art students an idle day, along with the rest of the student world."

"Hark! Didn't I hear the bell?"

"Listen, and hear if Kitty goes."

The intent listening was presently rewarded by the sound of footsteps along the hall in the distance.

"It must be the girls. I'll go at once," Adah said, suiting the action to the words. In a moment she returned, with an expression so utterly blank and woe-begone, that Rose could only gasp:

"Oh, Adah! What is it?"

"Read that!" Adah cried, thrusting a note before her whose blue and silver monogram was wet with tears of anger and disappointment. What Rose read, in the large and angular hand, was merely:

MY DEAR MISS DURAND :

Christine and I regret deeply that we are compelled to leave for the West to-day instead of to-morrow as we intended, and so are obliged to forego the pleasure of the visit with you and your charming cousin. With many thanks for your kind invitation,

Your sincere friend,

KATHERINE CURLETT.

The "charming cousin" was at that moment looking quite crestfallen. "To think of wasting all this!" she said mournfully. "I am sure they could never guess what they are missing. Those lovely deviled crabs, piping hot as they will be, and all that chicken salad, and those dear little rolls, and the almonds and olives and ices, and the border of smilax——"

"And the roses, and green peas, and bonbons," Adah added, almost laughing through her tears, at the absurd medley. "They are used enough to those things," she went on bitterly, "and I can't flatter myself they will mind missing them; but I do think it was a horrid trick to decline as late as this, and I do think they might have consulted our feelings as well as their own in this hurried departure. Besides, I don't believe they were compelled to go. It was just one of Christine's whims, that is all—and I am downright provoked!"

"We might carry out our programme, anyhow," Rose suggested forlornly; "take our drive——"

"And look like a couple of small pills rolling around in a very large pill-box!" she commented bitterly. "And the table is so pretty!"

"Can't we ask some one else?" Rose burst forth with sudden inspiration.

"Everybody has engagements by this time," Adah rejoined positively; "and besides, there isn't a girl in our set who wouldn't resent being asked so late."

"Then ask somebody who isn't in our set," Rose ventured boldly. "We need not let them know that they are mere substitutes. Or even if they discover that terrible truth, I am sure most girls would be sensible enough to understand the situation, and not to mind."

Adah was beginning to brighten visibly.

"There is that dear little Miss Sampson," Rose went on impulsively. "Little enough fun she has, digging away at the Normal and studying everlastingly, in season and out, to reach the time when she can make money. I fancy they must be very poor. And there is Eleanor Dielman, in the antique class—you know her—doing light housekeeping in a third-story back. I don't know which would do her the most good, the

flowers and the pretty china or the good things to eat."

"Upon my word, I'll do it!" Adah exclaimed, with an air of tremendous resolve. "I will see them myself—it is too late for notes. Graham can hitch up the phaeton in a jiffy. We will postpone lunch until twelve. You run and tell cook while I go for the girls. I wish I had asked them in the first place. Why do my selfish thoughts always come first? and after my beautiful talk just last Sunday to my Sunday-school girls about 'what is in the power of thine hand to do!'"

The last regretful sentence was uttered as she ran, and in five minutes Adah Durand was spinning down the street to hunt up tired little Miss Sampson, and that "third-story back."

Rose watched from the window in a fever of impatience during what seemed a long hour, and yet the hands of the ormolu clock had told but half that time when the phaeton drove swiftly up and the three girls sprang out upon the walk. Bright enough their faces were, though Miss Sampson's had the pinched look born of years of scrimped living.

Rose greeted them with the real delight she so heartily felt, and they had hardly removed their hats and gloves when Adah announced:

"We will go right out to lunch if you please. You see all the folks have gone down to the beach and we can choose what hours we like, so I ordered an early lunch to make time for a good, long drive afterward."

Rose, already pleased over the lovely luncheon, found her pleasure doubled in the delight of their guests. To see the light in Miss Sampson's tired, near-sighted eyes; to hear Eleanor Dielman's rapturous little cry when, discovering the card that bore her name, she lifted that cluster of fragrant roses from beside her plate, to feast her beauty-loving eyes upon them—that, Rose thought, would have given her an appetite for a dinner of herbs.

They all laughed gayly once, when Eleanor said, with an involuntary outburst of confidence: "Girls, you never could appreciate the solid satisfaction there is in all this daintiness and pretty service, unless, for a doleful term, you had lived the Bohemian life I have, and eaten baker's bread from your knee, with your wooden butter plate in the other hand."

After that she seemed to enjoy as heartily as they her narrations of the funny experience of light housekeeping in a "third-story back." "But after all," she finished whimsically, "it is a good deal funnier in the telling than in the experiencing,

and one does long, with real hunger sometimes, for a bit of civilized living. Scrappy things that one has cooked one's self are not always tempting when coming in discouraged from a hard day's wrestling with Ajax or Hercules—especially if they are served in the sweet simplicity of a tin pail or one's solitary chipped sauce-dish."

She laughed as she spoke, but observant Rose caught the gleam of a tear in her eye, and felt the more glad that "the dear child had one square meal, anyhow."

"And yet," Miss Sampson said meditatively, "I should think there would be some comfort in knowing you might cook what you like, have it clean, and eat all you please——" and then she flushed vividly with the painful consciousness that this might seem an insinuation against that authoritative person with whom she boarded, and whose advertisements read distinctly, "Plenty of good, wholesome food, well cooked."

If less conscious of its artistic merits, she was refined and girlish and hungry enough to enjoy this savory and exquisite lunch as thoroughly as the little art student did; and certainly when they rose from the table, bearing their sweet flowers with them, she was as impressed with a sense of content and well being.

The horses were waiting with the roomy

landau down at the gate, and tossing their fine heads impatiently. In a short time they had left the dirty streets of the city behind, and were bowling along shaded parkways toward the lake.

What an afternoon it was! And how long to be remembered. Miss Sampson could not recall anything so fine and breezy in all her experience.

Walking at home, and an occasional trip in a crowded car during her school season—these were her only ideas of locomotion. Pleasure trips were quite out of her range. Under the magic



of this novel elixir she found her spirits rising buoyantly, and her very shoulders with their student stoop beginning to straighten back firmly.

Eleanor was like a bird uncaged, pointing out here a pretty bit of wood, there a charming curve in the road, yonder a shimmer of light on the grass-fringed lake, here a restful shadow in the dark beech trees. Colors no one else could see, she found in lake and field and sky, and reveled in.

They nibbled the delicious bonbons Adah had stowed away on the back seat, quenched their thirst at a rippling spring, and came home as the shadows were lengthening, their arms laden with woodland treasures, and their cheeks as pink as the delicious rose tints from the setting sun.

When Adah and Rose talked it all over in the quiet that night, Adah said :

“Do you remember how Aunt Lou’s baby gurgles ‘Do it aden,’ when they splash him into his little bath-tub? Well, Rose, I certainly mean to ‘do it aden’ as often as I can. I never had a more satisfactory day, and I think I have some new lights on the text I taught so glibly last Sunday, ‘Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.’ ”

XVIII

IN DUE SEASON

“**S**HE hasn’t got the sense she was born with!” Miss Elvira exclaimed, bounding in with so wrathful a shake of her tall person that the very spools on the little table rattled sympathetically.

Miss Martha looked up mildly from her sewing. “Who do you mean, Elvira?” she asked.

“Why, Dorris, to be sure! Want to know what the little idiot is doing now? Well, she is giving hours of her precious time to that weakly little Hayden woman for never a cent of pay. And not only that, but teachin’ her things that’ll take the bread and butter right out of her own mouth besides!”

“I thought Mrs. Hayden was helping to bring the bread and butter in. Isn’t she one of Dorris’ drawing pupils?”

Miss Martha, the elder, gave a grunt of disdain. “You know a heap about it, Martha, now don’t you? So she was a drawing pupil once,

and Dorris had her sketchin' those ugly plaster things as if her life depended on it, a-stayin' after hours with her, and doing what not to help her along, 'cause she showed some interest."

"Well?" meekly questioned Miss Martha.

"Well, what business have poor folks got with such tomfoolery as charcoal drawin's, anyhow? She'd better a-been home with her babies."

"But I thought her husband took care of the babies on his off days."

"So he does; more fool he! He's a bigger simpleton over her 'talent' than she is. Didn't I hear him the day he came to engage her lessons? Such nonsense! Well, he's come to the end of his string, I guess. His engine jumped the track the other day, and he's a cripple for life."

Miss Elvira snapped the words out spitefully, and hardly heard her sister's horrified, "Oh, poor fellow!"

"And now," she continued, "what must Dorris do but take all their cares on her shoulders, as though she was a pack horse, and all that family her particular load. I think I can just hear her sayin', 'My dear Mrs. Hayden, it is a real pleasure for me to give you lessons, and you know I am here teaching, anyway, and what does one more in a class matter? I shall con-

sider it a real favor if you will come right along just as you always have.' Oh, I know her pretty little persuadin's, as if the favors she does was all on the other side."

"Well, I'm sure, Elviry, I think that was very sweet and nice of her."

"Sweet and nice of her!" Miss Elvira echoed with scorn so mighty that little Miss Martha seemed to wither under it like a blossom before a blaze. "I say its su-i-cide, Martha Martin. Listen!" and Miss Elvira clicked out a succession of sentences with telegraphic brevity. "Summer's comin' on. Pupils are dropping off. Only chance to make money 's gettin' orders and fillin' 'em. Used to make it pay sellin' little water-colors—went like hot cakes! Now, teachin' Mrs. Hayden to make the little water-colors, and usin' up her own time to do it. Mrs. Hayden's little water-colors will fill the market, and Dorris—Dorris 'll fill the poorhouse or a lunatic asylum!"

Miss Elvira flung herself across the room and started into the hall. But at the door she turned, re-entering abruptly. "Well, if I ever! Come here, Martha."

Martha obediently went as directed, and peered through the narrow crack in the direction her tall sister indicated. What she saw was a

quiet picture enough, and a pretty one too—far too quiet and too pretty to be taken in as tragic a manner as Miss Elvira's.

In a breezy little room across the hall a young girl in a long apron, with a paint-brush or two through her knot of brown hair, held up to view a heap of some soft, blue stuff that fell to her



feet, and which she was at the moment carefully drawing up and folding. Before her, rather stiff and awkward, stood a thin, stoop-shouldered little figure in a shabby gown.

From their safe retreat behind the

narrow crack the two sisters saw that heap of soft blue compactly rolled, wrapped, and tied; saw Dorris in the most carelessly laughing way place it on the arm of the shabby little woman; saw her walk the length of the hall, chattering gayly, bid her visitor good-bye at the head of the stairs, and return rather thoughtfully to her own room, which she entered for a moment before

running up the next flight to put her attic-studio to rights.

"That was her lovely new sateen!" Miss Martha exclaimed in a hushed and frightened voice. As for poor Miss Elvira, she sat down, for once speechless, and fanned herself while she rocked violently.

"Is she paid up on her board money?" Miss Martha ventured to ask.

"Oh, my, yes! I've got no complaint to make. She's always prompt with her board money. But feedin' ain't all a young girl needs. What pleasure does she get? What nice clothes? What money laid up for a rainy day?" And with wrath tempered by a certain mournfulness, Miss Elvira stalked downstairs to the dining room.

Her ire was scarce appeased when, a week later, Dorris came in at tea time, radiant, smiling, and exclaimed with delight: "Mrs. Hayden has sold her pretty little study of sweet peas; and her 'Road to the River' looks lovely framed, and will be sure to go soon too."

"What sales are you making?" somebody asked.

Dorris flushed. "I haven't been doing much," she said apologetically. "I have so little time—teaching, you know."

"Teaching one pupil," Miss Elvira sniffed, "and for charity too," she added under her breath.

Dorris, who did not hear all of the sentence, laughed lightly. "Come, now, it isn't quite so bad as that," she said gayly. "There are sometimes even—three," and her eyes twinkled.

"You said yourself that it took a class of eight or ten to pay expenses," Miss Elvira retorted triumphantly.

Dorris came as near looking annoyed as she could. "I beg you will not mind, Miss Elvira," she said, adding brightly, "it can't be cloudy always." Then she turned abruptly to Miss Martha. "Please," she coaxed, "may I have quite a little bunch of your beautiful pansies tomorrow—especially one or two of those fragrant white ones?"

"Indeed you may," Miss Martha consented heartily. "I do hope," she said to her sister afterward, "that she'll make a beautiful study of them, and sell it for a good, big sum."

They saw her going out the next afternoon, carrying the pansies carefully sheltered from the late afternoon sun, and they could only guess what became of them.

Time went on, and from Miss Elvira's point of view matters grew worse and worse.

Dorris was growing thin and "run down." Her once flourishing class had dwindled to almost no one, the greater number of pupils having gone off for their summer vacations, in several cases leaving their tuition bills unpaid behind them. There was little demand for paintings now, even had she taken time to do them; and all of her energies seemed directed toward helping "that backboneless little Mrs. Hayden," who alone took long half days of her time, week after week.

One morning in the first of August, Miss Elvira, entering Dorris' room with an armful of towels, found her crying bitterly. "What on earth!" she exclaimed, for Dorris idle at ten in the morning was hardly less astonishing than Dorris in tears.

"I know she is sick," the girl wailed despairingly. "I was afraid it was too much for her, caring for all those children at home, and working so hard here. Many a time, Miss Elvira, she has begun at five in the morning, washing or ironing, or making things ready to leave, and has reached here by nine o'clock to work hard all day. She looked like a ghost yesterday."

"So do you!" Miss Elvira exclaimed, flinging the towels into place with an impatient swish. "You're a nice pair!"

Without further effort at consolation she jerked herself from the room, and quite as testily jerked the house door behind her a few minutes later, and went swiftly down the street. The very ribbons on her bonnet stood erect and bristling; one hand tightly gripped a small covered basket; and when finally she reached the hot little house, without shade or yard room, at whose door she knocked, no avenging Nemesis could have looked grimmer.

"Mrs. Hayden live here?"

"Yeth, 'um," a small child answered, cowering back, and calling "Mamma," in half frightened fashion.

Mrs. Hayden herself appeared at almost the same instant. "Yes, ma'am," she replied to the stream of questions her visitor asked. "Mr. Hayden's mother has written for us to come there. They think maybe the leg can be saved yet. The "Road" is going to pay for the treatment; and the fare on the cars won't cost us nothing. Besides, I have saved up a little. It is all very sudden. I didn't get a chance to let Miss Dorris know. Johnny Burns was going to take her word to-night, after his work."

Nemesis had by this time so relaxed that by the aid of the downy peaches in her basket she had drawn the children to her side.

"That is something they haven't tasted since they left their grandmother's, two years ago," Mrs. Hayden said, smiling faintly. "It has been pretty hard lately on the children. Before the accident we had planned to rent a little house out on Wood Street with a yard and some shade trees. I don't know what I would a-done through all this trouble if it hadn't a-been for Miss Dorris. What she has done for us would fill a big book—and her just a young girl too."

Miss Elvira was looking with a gaze of recognition at the children's frocks. She had wondered why Dorris never wore her brown gingham any more. The two little girls were neatly dressed in it. And little Tommy's shoes! If they were not Dorris' second best button boots, then Miss Elvira's spectacles deceived her.

"Mith Dorrith fixtth my thoup when I wath thick," little Bessie piped.

"Yes, and she brought her pansies too," Mary added, "and they was most better than the soup. Grandma had pansies. Bess played dolly with these ones, and every one had its name, and the prettiest one was named Dorris."

Here Mr. Hayden appeared upon the scene, limping in painfully on his crutch. He was a fine, manly-looking fellow. "Money couldn't pay for what Miss Dorris has done," he said with

his face aglow, "but if ever I get on my feet again, it shall do what it can toward provin' our gratitude. Wife's kep' strict account of the lessons. She's the grandest girl I ever heard of, is Miss Dorris!"

"Yes," agreed Miss Elvira, rising to go, "but," she added absent-mindedly, "she's a good deal of a fool. I'll take her your message, Mrs. Hayden."

"I don't like her," said Mary when the door had closed.

"She means all right," the mother declared assuringly, and little Bess with her white teeth buried in a juicy peach, nodded her approval.

Miss Elvira's spirits were certainly sorely taxed in the days that followed, for Dorris' clouds grew heavier and her poor little pocket-book lighter with each succeeding week. Her stern arbiter was angrily conscious that the last payment of board money had left her with not a dollar to her name, and with little prospect of earning more until October and the summer tourists returned.

One evening her place was vacant at the tea table. "She has a raging headache," Miss Martha explained. "She hasn't eaten to amount to anything for two weeks, and she works as faithful with those three pupils that straggle in

one at a time, as if each one was a whole prompt-payin' class. She is all used up, and she needs a change. She ain't very strong, nohow."

"I have been urging and urging her," old Mr. Simpkins said, "to spend September up at the lake with my wife and daughters. The girls are anxious to have her, and it would do her a world of good, be just the rest and change she needs. The idea of fooling along here with only three pupils all this hot weather, when she has been working without a rest for three years! I don't see why she so persists in staying."

"Well, I see!" flared Miss Elvira; and then she went out with a bread plate and did not return.

"Something has got to be done," she exclaimed the next morning, as she went slowly up to Dorris' room with the morning mail. "Two letters for you," she said shortly, tossing them in to the girl who sat with her head in her hands at the window.

Dorris came back from visions of that cool and lovely lake with its beautiful sketching, its sails, its sweet air, and its manifold delights, and took up the letters with a sigh. "If I only had twenty big, round dollars," she said with a little gasping breath. Then some enclosures fell out of the note she unfolded, and she read:

MY DEAR MISS DORRIS :

I have just discovered this unpaid bill among Georgie's papers. Will you pardon her neglect? I enclose eight dollars. Yours,

W. H. NORTON.

"Oh!" Dorris exclaimed, and in her surprise she nearly forgot the stiffly scrawled envelope still unopened in her lap. When she remembered it and shook out its contents, a small, yellowish paper fell into view. "For forty-four lessons," it said, "at fifty cents a lesson, twenty-two dollars."

Small scowls of perplexity came into the girl's face, and these grew to deeper amazement when, from a carefully sealed, enclosed envelope, she drew a crisp twenty-dollar bill folded fraternally with its two-dollar associate. "How rash to send it in currency!" she first exclaimed, which proved—Miss Elvira to the contrary—that Dorris did have some business sense. Then she read :

DEER MISS DORRIS :

We are doin' fine the doctor says husband's leg will get cured he is already well enough to run on the Engine and has got a fine job. I can easy pay you for my lessons now. Mother when she herd about you wanted to advance the money short off and take it back when husband

draws his first pay. We can never repay you for your kindness. Mother thinks my Painting is a perfect meerkul. I owe everything to you. The children sends there love.

Your thankfull friend,

MRS. HAYDEN.

Dorris smiled, read the note again, and then, like the dear, delighted girl she was, broke into a flood of happy tears.

Miss Elvira heard the choking sound and came swiftly across the hall, Miss Martha after her.

For explanation, Dorris held forth the stiff little note and the rattling greenbacks.

“What have you got to say now, Martha?” Miss Elvira asked unthinkingly. “Didn’t I say that family of aspirin’ young beggars was honest as the day?”

Miss Martha, who had never breathed a word to the contrary, sighed with a sort of weak ecstasy :

“Now Dorris can go to the lake ! It’s gospel truth, what it says, ‘Cast thy bread upon the waters : for thou shalt find it after many days.’”

XIX

A HEART LESSON

LULU PAGE rushed in, "out of the wet," shaking the bright drops from her curls, and laughing light-heartedly.

"Did you ever see such a sudden, impertinent shower? It came pelting at me from a clear, blue sky, and drove me right out of the cherry tree. Oh!"—with a sudden change of voice—"I beg your pardon. I hadn't seen you, Mrs. Simpkins; so dark, you know, coming in from outside," and Lulu dropped into a willow chair not far from the window where her mother sat talking with the Widow Simpkins.

"What a dretful big girl to be climbin' cherry trees!" the Widow Simpkins was thinking severely, but she replied to the girl pleasantly enough, and turned again to Mrs. Page to take up the dropped conversational thread.

"Well, that's just how the matter stands, Mrs. Page. The doctors can't seem to see into the case at all. She's just a little rack o' bones,

lyin' there day in and day out. She don't eat more'n a bird, can't sleep, and can't even turn in the bed only on her best days."

"Poor little thing! Poor little thing!" Mrs. Page interrupted sympathetically, before the widow went on.

"They've been here in Englewood three months, and in all the time that child hasn't been off her back. She gets very lonely too. They don't know anybody to speak of here; can't get out to get acquainted. The mother is always with the sick girl, the grandmother doin' the work, and the father a close-toilin' mechanic."

"How old is the child?"

"Thirteen, they say; but she's such a little wasted thing, with her big innocent blue eyes, she don't look a day over 'leven."

"Thirteen! Just Lulu's age! Think of living such a life, Lulu—shut up in one room for three months, suffering all the time, and with nothing to amuse her or to make one day different from another!"

"Well, 'tain't so bad now, you know," Mrs. Simpkins said hastily. "I go there twice a week in the afternoons, and Miss Brooks once, and we take turn about reading a good book my father left me, a history of the lives of the ear-

lier saints. She's such a patient little saint herself, I thought the book was kind o' fittin'."

Just then a burst of sunshine flooded the room, as though to hunt out this patient little saint and crown her with glory.

Lulu caught up the book she had dropped—a cherished copy of "Little Women"—and has-



tened out to her haunt in the cherry tree, where, high up on an improvised seat, she spent many fleeting

hours, looking like some big, bright bird among the gleaming cherries.

If ever there lived a happy, wide-awake, fun-loving girl, that girl was Lulu Page. "A tomboy, you know," her best friends said, "but so sweet and loving and merry that you don't mind her pranks at all."

Now this happy "tomboy" was settling lazily against her cherry chair back, preparatory to another dip into that most delightful of

stories. She read one page, perhaps, and then bang! went the leaves together, while a petulant, "Oh, dear!" escaped the rosy lips.

"Why need I try to make myself miserable because that poor little ghost is?" she asked irrelevantly; but the cherries didn't seem to know, and the saucy catbird, deliberately picking the finest of the ripe fruit, only twitched its head from side to side and scolded at her.

"The lives of the earlier saints!" exclaimed the girl, her words ringing out so indignantly that the catbird, startled, flew away. "I shouldn't try to live; I should just die outright! The monotony would kill me if the sickness didn't. Not to race, or tear around, or play tennis, or ride my wheel—oh, good gracious, it would be too horrible! 'Poor little thing!' I should say. I'm thankful I've never been sick. I hate the sight of a sick-room—dim, suffocating, camphory places, with rows of medicine bottles—nasty things!—and rattly old pill-boxes. I always want to yell and screech in them, to keep from smothering. 'Lives of the saints!' How enlivening that must be to an aching shut-in girl just my age! Wonder how she'd like 'Little Women' for a change?" and then Lulu twisted about uncomfortably, and reached across a gnarled limb for a bunch of the scarlet fruit.

She didn't eat them, even then, but sat in a brown study for several minutes. "Oh, it's no use arguing on all sides. I simply never could do it in the world. It takes gentle people in soft slippers to do any good in a sick-room." Then she took up her book with decision and thought she had dropped the matter.

What opened her Bible that night at the beautiful twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew? And why did she toss about in bed for an hour afterward instead of going directly to sleep, as was her comfortable custom? "Sick and ye visited me not." How the words rang and rang in her head, and how solemn and dreadful they sounded. Unable to bear it longer, she bounced into the middle of the floor and lit the gas. A moment later, Mrs. Page, going up to bed, stopped in surprise at her daughter's doorway.

"Not asleep yet, Lulu? Why is this?"

Lulu rushed toward her impulsively. "There!" with a resounding kiss. "Go on to bed, mater mine. It only means a sort of wrestling-match, that's all; and to-morrow I'm going nursing."

Mrs. Page looked inclined to ask questions, but thinking better of it, kissed the bright-eyed "wrestler" and left her to herself, confident that the next day would explain things satisfactorily.

So it did. It was a beautiful, clear morning, just the sort of day Lulu loved best for tramping through the roads or rowing on the river. Her mother was correspondingly surprised therefore when she appeared, hatted and gloved, a book in her hand and a dainty basket of fresh flowers on her arm, to announce demurely :

“I’m going in to town, mamma.”

“‘Where are you going, my pretty maid’?” the mother asked, quoting Lulu’s pet jingle.

“‘I’m going a-nursing, kind sir, she said,’” sang Lulu brightly in return. “No, mamma, not exactly nursing, but I’m going to see that sick girl—just got her address from Mrs. Simpkins—to see if I can’t give her some different doses from the kind she has been having.”

Mrs. Page looked her approval. “I am glad to hear it, Lulu,” she said. “I have thought of that poor child all the morning, and have wished sincerely that you would go to see her, but I know how you hate such things.”

“Yes’m ; that’s what I wrestled about,” said Lulu, with an odd little laugh, and then she hurried off.

“Laura, here is some one to see Madge,” called the invalid’s grandmother up the stairway to the sick-room ; and in a moment Lulu, feel-

ing a trifle nervous and queer about her heart, was tiptoeing in.

The white little figure on the bed half turned, an unconscious sigh of pain escaping her, to see, not prim Miss Brooke or the widow Simpkins, but the freshest, sweetest, rosiest girl, with a smile on her face, and a fragrant, flowery scent all about her.

Madge gave a little glad cry and opened her lips to speak, but not a sound escaped them, only two great happy tears rolled down the wasted cheeks from the big, blue eyes.

"I'm afraid I'll throw you into a fever, I'm such a noisy thing," Lulu said solicitously; "but I couldn't bear to think of your lying here sick while I romped over whole acres of country, and so I came and brought some of the country with me. See, here is a sprig of lemon verbena—nearly all girls love that—and here is a bit of bark with a pretty clump of ferns growing to it, and here are flowers, and—have you read 'Little Women'?"

What a morning that was. Such gay stories as Lulu told of fishing parties and book clubs, and of how the new calf "went for" big Bert Brown who had teased it, and butted him right into the high board fence.

Lulu enjoyed her second reading of "Little

Women " almost more than the first, it was so pleasant to see the eager interest of the little invalid. Twelve o'clock came before they could believe it, and when Lulu had gone, Madge lay there feeling that it must all have been a happy dream, with only the cool, dewy flowers left as realities.

"Mamma," she said brightly, "it has made me feel like wanting to get well. I didn't care before, but now, if the new doctor can help me, how glad I'll be, and how hard I'll try."

She did try, and the new doctor did his best, and Lulu went again and again, and between times she wrote odd little letters, and the other girls wrote them. Pleased Papa Burton said it was the queerest post office he ever saw, where stories and flowers and notes and milk-weed pods, and once even a pet gosling passed through. Then Madge herself grew able to write, holding a flat book against her knees, and how happy that made her bevy of anxious correspondents.

The happiest time of all came when the good doctor pronounced his little patient actually on the sure, if slow, road to recovery. The girls had a gentle jubilee in the now sunny sick-room, and many times Lulu recalled her first visit and the memorable words that impelled her to make it.

"Oh, I'm so glad—so glad I came!" she said, as she kissed Madge good-bye that night.

"So am I, you darling. I believe the good Lord sent you."

"I know it," Lulu answered solemnly. "Some day when you visit my cherry-tree nest I will tell you all about it."

All the way home in the twilight her heart was singing, "Sick and ye visited me," and the words made her nervous no longer; they were only sweet and gracious and tender, for the voice of the Master she had tried to obey was vibrating in them.

XX

HOW FRANC TOOK NOTES

“Home again, home again,
From a foreign shore.”

FRANC caroled the words airily, having dropped with an excited little laugh into the easiest chair in the handsome rooms. One quick toss had landed her hard-earned diploma in one direction, and her fan in another, and now, with pretty exclamations of surprise and pleasure, she was examining the dainty trinkets and accompanying cards, which were heaped about her.

“The dearest Shakespeare bracelets! See Marion! And this vinaigrette; isn’t it a beauty?”

“Then it is worth while to be a sweet g.g. is it?” Ed said with mock seriousness. “You may forget the signs of the zodiac and the Latin name for chickweed, but the silver beads and the flowers and the trinkets, never!”

“Anyhow, if there were no trinkets, nor

flowers, nor 'nuffin,' I'd be glad to be home again."

"Why, you haven't been away!" matter-of-fact little Beth insisted. "'That is, you haven't been any farther away than the opera house."

"Ah, my small sister, that is all you know about it," Franc laughed. "For months and months I have soared off on rhetorical flights, scaled the dizzy heights of astronomy, roamed through the thorny flowerland of the botanist, dug into the hard mines of the mathematician, and floated dizzily upon seas of thin, white goods, feather fans, and silk ribbons. Why, I hardly know whether the dinner hour is one or six, whether the library floor is carpeted or waxed, whether papa plays chess in the evening, or reads 'Napoleon and his Marshals.' I have been gone so long in fact that I shall have to be newly introduced all over the dear old house."

"We shall all be glad to meet and to know again our Eugenia Franc, the dear, bright girl of whom we felt so proud to-day," said Mother Bayliss with a fond hand upon Franc's brown curls. "It will seem good just to rest for a while. Don't you think so?"

"That it will, mother mine, for I am tired out; and now that the race is over, I feel as limp as these poor, drooping roses."

She did not look like that, certainly, with her fair, flushed face, her dancing eyes, and the saucy curls flowing back from her forehead. Rather more like a wilted blossom looked Marion, whose white face and dark-rimmed eyes gave too convincing evidence of physical weariness.

"Never mind, Franc, a month at Lake MacTenlar will make you forget that you ever burned the midnight oil or skewed your forehead into Greek letters," Ed said consolingly.

Certainly the prospect of that delightful summer at Lake MacTenlar went far toward smoothing out the forehead of the tired student. But what of the week that intervened? Franc decided to make it a time of thorough rest, that she might feel vigorous enough to enjoy the delights of wood and lake when they were within reach.

The very next morning she began. There was a glorious breeze where the big hammock swung on the side porch. There she stretched at full length, and dozed, and read, and hummed gay little snatches of college glees. Once in a while Marion passed by the window, her arms full of books or clothing. Occasionally little Beth looked out too—Beth, who had Marion's great honest eyes and merry smile, and who carried similar if smaller loads of freshly ironed clothes or boxes or books.

"What on earth are you two girls doing?" Franc asked presently, one slender finger on the paragraph she was reading. The girls had vanished, but Mother Bayliss, her apron bristling with pins and needles, answered for them:

"We are just beginning the packing, dear. Getting ready for camp is no small undertaking; and the house must be left all ready for the cleaning in the fall."

"Yes'm," Franc answered with dim comprehension, and then adding that it was very delightful to read a little trash after so much mental oatmeal, she picked up her book. It was not until that evening that she considered seriously how much Beth and Marion had been doing.

"Well, mamma," she asked, "have we discharged both cook and house girl, and are the Misses Bayliss running the domestic machine?"

"Oh, dear, no!" said Mrs. Bayliss with a laugh. "Sarah and Maggie are not discharged; they are doing their regular work. It is the extras that Marion and Beth are doing—work which hired help could hardly do at all."

"When I think of the loads of things they have packed, and the quantities of camphor and cedar chips they have disposed of, I begin to fancy that there may be things about housekeeping that are as wearing as calculus."

Marion was too generous to agree with her, and only replied with loving eyes on her pretty sister: "If I could have shone in my studies as you have, sister mine, I should rest content, and not bother my head about anything so mundane as chests of winter clothes and cedar chips."

Franc felt an uncomfortable little pang somehow at the words, but dispelled it with the thought: "Of course we can't all do everything. I can't be family bookworm and family house-help too. Marion is just cut out for such work."

Marion, whether "cut out for such work" or not, went on in her own uncomplaining way day after day, getting ready the boxes of dishes and bed clothing which were to go north to the camp at Lake MacTenlar, and the clothes, the curtains, and the bedding, which were to be left at home in Carrollton.

During the warm evenings before their departure, merry crowds of young people called, and it was generally the case that tired Marion asked to be excused, while Franc entertained the guests in her own pretty, rippling way, and felt what an advantage it was to have one member of the family ready to bear "the social burdens."

"You don't know how I enjoy the home life

again," she said one night to tall Helen Rand, who had dropped in on some errand, as she passed.

"Yes," Helen answered sympathetically, "and I can readily guess how glad the home is to welcome you back, and what a help you must be in it. These are busy times of course, with all the packing and sewing."

"Ye-es," Franc answered, and she blushed a little down under her brown curls. Only to herself she made confession that she didn't perhaps do much in the home. "But then they don't mind," she reasoned. "They don't really expect it of me. Marion is used to it and likes it. Soon as I'm rested I'll study hard, for I mean to grow into a fully developed, fine, strong woman, physically, mentally, and morally."

So Marion went on working and Franc idling until, arrangements complete, they were off for Lake MacTenlar. Then there was all the work of preparing the camp for its long summer occupancy, a task in which Marion, Beth, Ed, Donald, and Mother Bayliss shared with equal energy.

Meanwhile Franc wandered off with book or pencil through the long happy day. No one seemed to expect anything else of her. They had grown accustomed to treating her as a sunny

little guest of the family, and she herself was thoroughly content to be so treated. Even when faithful Sarah grew ill, and the heavy work of the camp fell upon the home hands, it scarcely seemed to occur to Franc that she could be of any assistance. Marion cooked and swept, Marion washed great stacks of dishes; and Franc, offering once to wipe the teacups, felt a glow of satisfaction at the thought that she had really earned the gratitude Marion expressed.

One day something happened. Sarah, still sick, was lying on her cot in one of the smaller tents; Mother Bayliss and the girls were doing the hot routine of work; the boys were carrying water and bringing wood—in the midst of it all the old ferryman crossed the lake and deposited upon Point Bayliss a large, grand-looking woman and a trunk.

“Aunt Laura!”

Everybody sounded the exclamation at a breath in a glad chorus. Wherever she went helpful, sensible Aunt Laura was “a tower of strength.”

“Where is little Franc?” she asked, after the first greeting.

“Franc? She is off with a party of young folks exploring Shut-in Cove,” somebody answered.

Aunt Laura glanced about at the work yet to be done, and raised her fine eyebrows. In half an hour, enveloped in a large, brown apron, she was hard at work in the kitchen with Marion, noting that loved niece's sweet, unselfish face, while she talked brightly of her last trip through Scotland and all the wonderful things she had seen.

"It is like a beautiful lesson," Marion said, when the last dish was washed and the last pan put in place. "How Franc would have enjoyed it!"

"Why Franc more than Marion?" Aunt Laura asked.

"Oh, not that she could have enjoyed it more; it is only that she knows so much already about those places that she would have seemed a more appreciative listener."

Aunt Laura's smile was somewhat incredulous. "So Franc graduated in June?" she said.

"Oh, yes, with the highest honor!"

"And you, dear, why did you never finish?"

For an instant a shade crossed the fair face, and then Marion replied simply, "Dr. Raybourn forbade it. It was a matter of health."

"And you are going to iron to-morrow?"

"Well, you see, auntie, it is the most impossible thing to get help out here. We did find a

woman to wash, but she couldn't be persuaded to come another day to iron. Our doing it is a matter of necessity. By next week we may be able to get some one from the city."

Aunt Laura made no reply, but she thought some long, long thoughts.

Franc did not return until late in the afternoon. "Such a lovely time!" she exclaimed radiantly. "Dearest little lunch at Dr. Deland's cottage, and a delicious afternoon on the water! I rowed two miles, and have developed, besides muscle, a hearty appetite for those fresh berries and Marion's light muffins."

Already she had dropped into a seat at the table, and was pushing back her light sleeves that they might not dip into the butter or cream. Marion, flushed from the kitchen fire, brought in the hot, crisp muffins.

"That's right, little girl," said Aunt Laura to Franc; "you need to be strong in a country where cooks are as scarce as ostriches. I suppose you and Marion take turns about in the kitchen. You look better able to stand your day than Marion does hers."

Franc looked quickly at her sister. "Oh, it is only where studies are concerned that Marion is not strong," she said. "See what roses she has in her cheeks. And she loves such work, Aunt

Laura. I don't! It really doesn't seem to be my forte."

Aunt Laura stifled the indignant words that rose to her lips and replied quietly: "A passion for hot work in hot weather is rather unusual, is it not? Has Beth also this craving for dish washing and cooking? She seems to have been pretty busy too."

Franc's face grew a degree warmer, although the words were cool and slow. "Aunt Laura doesn't understand the difference in our natures," she thought. Aloud she replied, "I feel it a duty to do mental rather than manual training, auntie."

The auntie said no more, but resolved that her pretty little niece should receive new ideas as to her duty before she left Lake MacTenlar. Mother Bayliss, when questioned as to Franc's share in the work, answered leniently: "Oh, Franc is young, you know, just fresh from her books, and perhaps a little thoughtless. It will all come right in time."

"Indeed it must," was Aunt Laura's inward comment, "if my interest in the matter avails anything."

The next morning she met Franc as that young lady, tennis racket in hand, was starting off toward Dr. Deland's attractive cottage.

"More mental training, Franc?" she asked, and Franc did have the grace to blush as she answered, "Oh, well, one must be strong before one is able to do much mental work. Tennis is splendid exercise. Don't you think so, auntie?"

"That I do!" Aunt Laura answered heartily; "but there is something I so much wish you to do for me, Franc, if you are willing to give up the tennis for one morning."

"Why, certainly," Franc answered, with the quick, bright smile that came so naturally to her. "I would be ashamed if I were too selfish to deny myself a trifling pleasure to serve you."

Aunt Laura looked rather taken aback for a moment by the prompt frankness and good nature of the reply. "Surely it must be gross thoughtlessness and some honestly mistaken ideas that make her so selfish," she decided, and immediately explained the "something" she wanted done, a something to open the eyes of the blind little girl.

"It is an odd request I have to make, Franc, but I believe I can trust you to do what I want done, and that without question. I want you to make faithful note this morning of all that Marion does and says—even her expression when it is possible to get it without attracting her attention."

"How funny!" Franc exclaimed involuntarily; "but you always did do such funny things, Aunt Laura dear. Written notes? All right. I'm equal to it. In our lecture courses everybody admitted that I could take notes the fastest."

"It is eight o'clock now," Aunt Laura said, "and of course we lose a good deal of time, as Marion got up at six. But begin now."

So Franc, with pencil and note-book, the latter hidden in a volume of poetry, took an easy-chair between the dining-room and kitchen tents, and prepared to do some quiet observing.

There wasn't much that she hadn't seen before at different times. First, Marion scraping plates and carrying loads of dishes from dining room to kitchen. Franc began to count the number of times she walked back and forth with dishes—eleven she found it was—before she came with a broom to sweep out the big tent. After that she fed the old watch-dog, and calling Beth began to wash the dishes.

Mother Bayliss was not about. "Strange she isn't helping," Franc thought; but peeping farther into the dining room she discovered that busy woman sprinkling and folding the clothes—"a mountain of them," Franc thought.

She had to move her seat then to see better



"Franc began to count the times."

into the kitchen, where Marion washed the piles of dishes, pans, and kettles. It was rather tedious mechanically counting the plates and platters, and the number of times she lifted the heavy kettle to scald a panful of crockery; so Franc began to watch her face instead. She had never noticed its looking so tired before. It seemed quite white, except when flushed with some sudden exertion or heat; and now and then Marion pushed back the stray locks from her forehead, as though their soft fluttering pained her. Franc noted it all diligently while Marion straightened the wood box, filled the kettle, called Donald to bring water from the lake, washed the table and dish towels, and swept the floor.

"Now she will sit down and rest," Franc thought. But she did not. She went to the great ice chest just outside the dining-room screen, and began to remove butter jars, meat, and pans of milk, preparatory to washing it out. It made Franc tired just to watch her bending over and lifting the heavy things, and she felt relieved when the hard task was done; but after all it didn't seem to make much difference for the next thing seemed just as hard. "Goodness! To see her lifting that clumsy ironing board and dragging it across the dining room!"

"Don't begin the ironing yet, dearie," Mother Bayliss called. "Sit down and shell the peas first; that will rest you."

"But, mamma, Beth or Donald can shell the peas as well as I, while the ironing—well, you know there is a good deal of it, and it is better to get it done before the sun gets higher, and while there is a breeze from the lake."

So Beth took the basket of peas and went out to a hammock under the birch trees, while Marion began at the top of the huge basket of clothes.

"Dear me! I didn't know I had three white skirts in the wash," Franc soliloquized with real remorse, "and such fussy ones too!"

While she watched Marion straightening out the flounces and the points of lace and embroidery and pressing the hot iron over them, Aunt Laura passed with broom and dustpan toward the bedroom tents.

"Isn't it nice that Marion loves it so, all this sort of thing?" she said in the most innocent way to Franc; and that rosy little note-taker began to feel an odd sensation about the region of her heart.

Marion had finished the three skirts and had begun a long night-dress, when suddenly, unconscious that observant eyes were on her, she

pressed her hot hand to her tired back, and with a little cry of pain or exhaustion, sank into a chair near by. In another instant, hearing Mother Bayliss coming with a second ironing board, she stood again quickly, and began a cheery little song, while she pressed hard upon the tucks of the dainty gown-yoke.

"If I ever bring anything but untrimmed muslin up here again!" Franc said under her breath.

It was the hardest note-taking she had ever done. Nothing in Dr. Hayne's lecture room could have compared with it. She counted up the articles Marion had ironed and held her breath at the sum total. That cunning blouse which she had worn boating with Stella Cassell, the pretty wrapper in which she had lolled long hours in the hammock—and Marion ironed on with aching back until time to fry the fish which Ed had caught and cleaned for dinner.

Before Marion and Mother Bayliss had finished getting "that dreadful dinner," the mist about Franc's eyes made the lines in her notebook dim, and though she held to her promise heroically, and watched her sister and wrote her notes until high noon, when that time had come she rushed headlong to her own tent corner and cried as only a contrite sinner could.

Aunt Laura was not surprised that Franc was late to dinner. Neither was any one else, for that matter; Franc was often too engrossed in book or pastime to be prompt. The surprise came afterward, when a gay little bevy called to take Franc sailing, and she gratefully but decidedly declined going.

"I mean to take a new kind of exercise this afternoon," she said. "When Sarah gets about again, or we find a culinary treasure in the city, Marion and I will be more than glad to join in all the frolics."

"Marion and I!" Marion back in the dining room listened amazed. She to be included in Franc's frolics? A moment later her amazement increased when sturdy "student Franc" marched her by both shoulders out to the hammock, where pillows and books and a cool breeze from the lake tempted to quiet and repose.

"There, Mistress Marion, you are not to do that entrancing work a minute longer! I'd marshal mamma out after you, only that I am too green not to need an overseer. After this though, you uncomplaining darling, we will see if we can't do some new problems in division."

Marion didn't see how she could stay there and rest, with mamma and Franc and Beth at

work, and she meant to slip back among them in a few moments ; but she stretched her tired limbs in the hammock with a sigh of utter content, and five minutes later Franc, in her big apron, peeping around the side of the tent, saw her sound asleep, the fresh, sweet breeze stirring the hair about her face and swaying the hammock as gently as it did the cobweb hammocks swinging in the grass.

"I never was so tired in my life," Franc said to Aunt Laura that night, "nor so happy. That note-book, meant to mirror Marion, mirrored me instead. It made me see myself as I never did before, as I hope I never shall again. Oh, Aunt Laura, did you see that great monster of selfishness I saw to-day while I took these notes?"

Aunt Laura smiled. "I saw a little Undine discovering her soul," she answered enigmatically.

"Anyhow," Franc said soberly, "funny as it is, I never took a sail that gave me half the pleasure I found in missing that one to-day."

Aunt Laura was silent a moment ; then she said, with her firm hand upon Franc's newly blistered ones : "You are beginning to learn the sweetness of an old, old truth, and the more you study it the richer and happier your life will

grow. You have heard the old text, dear ; you may prove it each day that you live : 'He that resisteth pleasure crowneth his life.' Are you willing to try ? "

Though Franc could not speak for the choke in her throat, the tears in her brown eyes answered for her, and Aunt Laura was more than satisfied.

XXI

HER HOME-COMING

IF Mamma Vance could have looked in upon them she would have been undoubtedly astonished. Sadie sat on the great rolling head of the lounge, pounding a pillow with emphasis as she spoke. The four boys were grouped about her, their cheeks rather red, their eyes rather bright, their heads thrown back indignantly. When the long-suffering pillow had received its final thump, and Sadie had drawn herself up tragically to her full height, Eugene asked hotly :

“What ever put such nonsense into your head, Sadie?”

“It’s preposterous!” Jack stormed.

Warm-hearted little Fritz was in tears. “It’s a lie!” he wailed.

Stanford said not a word, but his angry tread up and down the room spoke volumes for him.

“Nonsense, I say!” Eugene repeated wrathfully. “Slight mother! Who dared say so?”

Why, Sadie Adams, there isn't a mother in the world like ours. We'd do anything on earth for her. I speak for the crowd."

"He thpeakth for me," Fritz agreed.

"Do you suppose we'd mope around here and actually lose our appetites for the sake of the mother-bird if we didn't love her and care for her?" Jack demanded.

"I jutht love gingerbread"—this from Fritz—"and latht night I thimply couldn't endure it."

"Oh, let up on the gingerbread!" Stanford growled. His tramp was not conquering the irritation he felt. "See here, Sadie, I demand as does Eugene, your reason for this—this accusation." The tramp had come to a halt. "We slight marmee and make her unhappy? Who has dared hint it? Who has given you so ridiculous an idea?"

Sadie's severe little face relaxed; she was the stern accuser no longer. "Boys, shake hands," she said, "two at a time, please. I knew it couldn't be true, but I had to satisfy my mind about it."

"Well, just suppose you satisfy our minds," Stanford snapped. He did not look any too willing to accept her overtures.

"Oh!" Sadie exclaimed, a momentary flush on her fair face.

"Your authority, please," Jack said loftily. He had an idea that he had read some such lofty demand in his history some place. "Your authority."

"Auntie Vance," Sadie answered demurely.

The boys started as though they had simultaneously received a mental knock-down.

"The mater!"

"Marmee!"

"Not the mother herself!"

"Gee whith!"

Sadie, still demure, nodded comprehensively to the four. "That's what I said."

"Oh, come now, Sadie, this is one of your tricks."

"You can't make game of us, Cousin Sadie; we know you too well."

For answer Sadie drew from her pocket a much-crumpled letter and stepped with it across to the bright lamplight of the library table. "Read that," she said, pointing out a portion of the writing so familiar to the four boys. "It was one of the last letters she wrote me before I came home."

This was what the boys read:

We have decided to take our trip, Sadie, your uncle and I. It will be our first together in all our wedded life, and I know it will do us both

good. I have been feeling tired and worn lately. When the boys were little fellows, though they took up all my time and thought, I never felt it. They were so grateful and loving that it was real pleasure to feel myself their daily necessity, their friend and helper.

It is so different now, Sadie. They are good boys—generous and high-principled—and yet many a time I choke with tears to feel that the entire love they gave me once is mine no longer. I am afraid they have outgrown me, as they have outgrown their knee trousers and their childish dependence upon me. When they were little lads I truly think they could not have slept without their good-night kisses to me, while now—but I shall only hurt your kind little heart with this kind of letter.

Of course they love me, Sadie; they must surely! It is only natural, I suppose, for boys as they grow up to lose their loving little ways. They are not like girls. If I had a daughter, it might be different, perhaps; but mother-love is strong, and I feel fairly starved sometimes. Even little Fritz forgets to snuggle up to mamma's knee as he once did, or to pat her tired old hands. It has made me feel like a machine, though the duties I once had were heavy compared with the slight demands upon my time now.

Then followed details as to the arrangements for the trip, the friend who had volunteered to keep house, and expressions of gladness that

Sadie too would be home to brighten things up for the dear, big boys.

"The dear, big boys" had grown rather misty about the eyes.

Sadie suddenly re-folded the letter and caught up her hat: "There is Lou at the gate. Good-bye, boys. Forgive my being entirely frank with you. I'll see you again about this business."

When she had gone the boys were singularly silent.

"You will oblige me, Jack, if you will fall on me and break all my bones," Stanford said slowly at last. Jack was "the biggest of the big" among the boys, and weighed a hundred and forty.

"I could crawl through a knot-hole," he replied.

"No, you couldn't," Eugene said, and though it was a favorite joke nobody smiled.

Fritz, with his eleven years, his dimple, and his "lipthp," had disappeared. There was hot gingerbread again when the tea bell rang, and it seemed to him less endurable than before.

"What was the matter with the boys?" Mrs. Beman asked her husband that night.

"It's never worth while to study the motives of the boy, my dear. The goat, the spider, the

kangaroo, are all laid down in natural history, but the boy——” and he wiped his hands with a gesture full of meaning.

“It is on my mind; I don’t care,” Mrs. Beman enunciated. Whenever she “didn’t care,” she was taking things seriously. “I promised their good mother that I would see to those boys; the house was a minor matter, in fact. I must investigate the trouble to-morrow, for trouble there is, I am sure. They hadn’t even their appetites. Think what an anomaly, a boy without an appetite! Mrs. Vance said hot gingerbread would comfort them in any distress. Why, Arthur,” and the little lady looked quite despairing, “only one of them touched it—Stanford—and he choked and left the table.”

Trouble indeed! The boys pretended to sleep at once that night; they had nothing to say to each other. Each supposed the others asleep; each tried to lie very quiet; and each groaned at the thought that the dear, patient mother had been deeply hurt by their treatment of her, when they would have resented the slightest annoyance caused her by any other. Love her? Each groaned harder at the reflection that his own conduct was to blame for her doubt of it.

Suddenly there was a stir in the far corner. Fritz had bounced out of bed and down upon

his knees. There was a dim light in the room. Three boys might have been discerned raised upon their elbows, staring. Fritz at his prayers a second time!

"Shows his good sense," said Stanford in a subdued whisper to Eugene, with whom he slept.

"Well, I've had that out," said Eugene. "Did some good too. No matter how dull my head is, as soon as I get to my knees the Lord sends me some spick and span idea. I'm going to sleep now; I'll divulge the plan to-morrow."

Sadie came again next day.

"I have an idea!" Eugene exclaimed with some force.

"Dew tell!" and Sadie laughed merrily. "Not all by yourself, Eugene?"

"Well, no, not all by myself," and Eugene looked wisely at Stanford. "It came from our Best Friend last night. Let me tell you, Sadie, we are going to do an old German trick to begin our new conduct toward mamma. We are going to give her a real little demonstration as a welcome home. I remember the time she got back from that district mission convention, and we were all playing ball on the lot and didn't even come in to see her until tea time. It wasn't because we didn't love her; it was——"

"Because we were blind fools," Stanford interrupted.

"But here is a point, boys," Sadie said suddenly. "Auntie must not know that I have had any hand in this sight-to-the-blind business. I shall not even hint any help to you about your welcome to her. She must not suspect me. It must be all your own performing, straight from your own hearts." With that she marched off down the gravel path to the gate.

"Of course," shouted four boys after her.

"We are not going to have mamma thinking we have needed lessons on how to love her. Trust us to do it alone," and Jack tossed his head.

It was the sweetest time of the year in Vernon, but October days were coming on and the flowers were growing scarce. "Flowers we must have!" the boys had said, and Fritz hung over the late roses, the sweet alyssum, and chrysanthemums, as though his fondest hopes lay in their blooms.

Eugene, who had graduated and was at work on a salary, was keeping some very bright dollars up in his collar box for a very bright purpose. Jack and Stanford, still in school, decided upon one thing at least they could do. They could earn money after school hours and together hire

old Aunt Dinah to make one of her famous great cakes, with "Welcome" on it in chocolate frosting.

"I've thought of something new!" Jack exclaimed rushing in, quite breathless, one evening. "You know mamma has admired Mrs. Green's dress window-seats. I mean to rig one up and have it all ready for the mater when she gets back."

"That comes in the line of my plans," Eugene said with eagerness. "I meant to get her one of those pretty, low sewing tables with a chair to suit. We will fix her room up jim-dandy!"

"What can be the matter with those boys?" Mrs. Beman said again. "Jack, whom I have always thought rather fat and lazy, is working like a beaver on a long window-seat up stairs in which his mother may lay her dresses at full length without crumpling them. He has asked me a dozen questions about the best kind of padding for the top of it and the prettiest color to cover it with, 'something warm and bright, for that's what the mater likes.' I never saw such boys."

She repeated that statement on the night when the telegram came:

"Be home on the 5.30 train to-morrow."

The boys were quite wild all the following day. How they did work! Over the doorway within the porch there grew under their swift fingers a great, green arch with Mamma Vance's initials in chrysanthemums on it. The roses and sweet alyssum went into vases for the tea table, the library, and the mother's bedroom.

"What a knack you have, Fritz!" Mrs. Beman said in surprise, for the flowers were beautifully arranged, and Fritz, his black eyes shining, was putting his very soul into his loving finger tips.

He had emptied his bank to buy for the returning mother two of the loveliest winter rose plants the florist's hothouse held. These, their pots decked in green, occupied places of honor beside the great cake on the tea table, and the *Bon Silène* bore amid its graceful leaves a card on which, in Fritz's bold writing, were seen the words, "Sweets to the sweet. From your loving Fritz."

It was a chilly night, though the day had been clear. There were softly sputtering fires throwing up their merry flames in the gayly decked library and the mother's pretty room. Just at five Jack and Eugene were taking a last view there.

"How she will like that window-seat! It is

pretty, if I do say it, and how the firelight brightens it up."

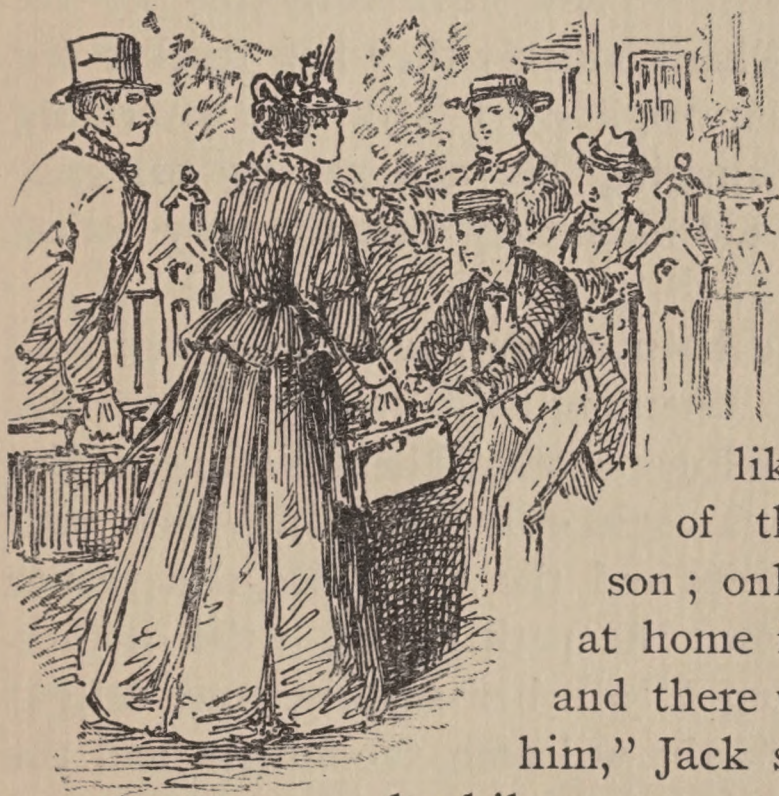
"Don't the roses look lovely?"

"Doesn't the polished table shine?"

"And how easy the sewing chair is!"

And then with a final touch of careful, boy-

ish hands here and there, they joined Fritz and Stanford at the gate.



"It is like the story of the prodigal son; only he stayed at home in this case, and there were four of him," Jack said a little huskily.

"I'll tell you this, boys," said Eugene stoutly, "I have been thinking about this thing, and either thinking or praying has brought me more new ideas. I don't believe any fellow ever gets too big to love his mother, and I don't believe, if he is an honest, manly fellow, that it will take away from his manliness one whit to

show that he loves her. Bless her heart! Three cheers for the mater: 'Rah, 'rah, 'rah!'"

The ring of the cheery hurrahs sounded over the frosty air and reached the hack around the corner. There was a hard little pain at Mamma Vance's heart. "They are playing ball again," she thought. "They have forgotten we are coming." Then suddenly they had reached the gate, and four bright-eyed boys were swarming about her, hugging her and patting her gray hair as they did when they were the very littlest fellows.

"We have been as dull as owls without you, you darling," Stanford said, taking the smaller valises, while Eugene offered her his arm grandly. Fritz and Jack could only help Mr. Vance with the shawl straps and the big valise, and prance like girls down the path behind "the mother-bird," waiting to see her surprise and delight over the arch, the welcome, the flowers, and the general festivity of the dear old home.

Next day when Sadie came in she started in amazement. "Auntie Vance! you are looking ten years younger. I think you did need a trip!"


"It wasn't the trip, Sadie; it was the boys. You remember what I wrote you? It was all my silly imagination. They do love me. They

were so glad to see me! Sit down, dear, and let me tell you all about it."

As pretty Sadie dropped down upon the dainty window-seat she couldn't help saying, with her glad little laugh, "I told you so, auntie! I told you so!"

XXII

A SUNSHINE MAKER

NNIE MACGREGOR slipped into her little back bedroom, sprung the latch on the door, and dropping into the one rocking-chair burst into a storm of tears.

"I can't stand it! I can't! I wish I were dead and buried or couldn't feel or think! Father sick, mother worried to death, Cathie cross, and the children wretched and forlorn! If we had anything, anything to live for! But what is there? Bad health, hard times, no pleasures anywhere! Just grind and grind, and struggle and fret. If we had money, oh what couldn't we do! Send father South, take the burden from mother's tired shoulders——"

A brisk tapping at the door startled her to her feet.

"Annie, Annie dear, may I come in?"

Annie drew the latch and opened the door. "If it were any one else I'd say no, Miss Polly, but there isn't any sense in saying no to you."

Then, with a woebegone smile: "How do you always find out when folks get into the very valley of blackness? You pop up at the identical minute like a jolly little Jack-o'-lantern."

Miss Polly laughed a soft little laugh that did not grate upon the tired nerves or sore heart of the girl turning, red-eyed and half-defiant, from her. Then she said gently: "Just now, my dear, you are resenting the flash of the meddlesome Jack-o'-lantern, for you don't want even comforting. Isn't it so? You think there is the ring of sounding brass about it all. Then listen, child, for I didn't come to comfort but to scold. I have decided that a plain, sound scolding is what you need to bring you to your five senses and a brand-new, brave, courageous spirit."

Annie did not speak, only the quick tears welled again to her eyes as she perched upon the bed, leaving the single chair for her guest.

"Do you know," that guest went on, "that you are manufacturing fog faster than a November morning? that you are becoming a worthy mistress of dumps and doldrums? and worst of all, my dear child, that the one thing your father most needs you are persistently defrauding him of?"

"What on earth do you mean?" Annie asked blankly, opening her wet eyes in wonder.

"Sunshine," Miss Polly responded promptly. "Just that and nothing more. As well expect a rose to blossom in a vault as a man to recover health and vigor in a house like this. Solemnly, Annie, I would rather live in a frog pond. It would be more cheerful, for the frogs are lively, splashing fellows if their song is a trifle hoarse, while here!" and she paused, rolling her eyes in mock despair.

Annie smiled in spite of herself. "It isn't exactly festive over here," she admitted; "but what can you expect with sickness and pinching poverty——"

"Oh, come now, Annie, you aren't starved or actually uncomfortable, and you needn't all prepare to figure as 'respected remains' in a funeral just because Father MacGregor is sick. I tell you sepulchral gloom isn't calculated to cheer him the least bit in the world. Here, child, put on my glasses a minute and see if you can see yourself as I see you," and Miss Polly ran to the door, calling back, "I will try—like the funny man in the concert troupe—to give you a c'rect imitation of Miss Annie MacGregor as she appears before her family. Scene, the sitting room; time, seven o'clock of a rainy morning."

Then she whisked into the hall, returning in a moment with her face long, her eyes mourn-

ful, and her mouth drooping plaintively at its rosy corners. "Good morning, father," she said wearily, addressing the rocking-chair. "I can see by your eyes that you slept little last night. Oh, dear, dear! What wouldn't I give to see you well and strong! I'm afraid you'll never be yourself again. Do you feel as if you could eat anything?" and Miss Polly sighed deeply. Then she turned suddenly to Annie's umbrella standing in a corner. "Mattie, there's a hole in your shoe! Oh, I'm sure I don't know what we are coming to! This carpet is in rags and the paper is peeling off the dining-room wall, and there's no money to get even the delicacies poor, sick father ought to have."

Miss Polly wrung her pretty, plump hands and stared hard at Annie. "'Then,'" she continued, "Cathie comes in, and you mourn with her over the wickedness of the small schoolboy; and you tell your mother she is looking thinner every day, and that you are so afraid the missionary society will think it is pure indifference that is keeping her away from the meetings."

Annie's face was flushed, partly from anger, partly from shame. "What would you have me do? Clap my hands and shout with joy because father looks like a ghost, and the house is going to ruin?"

"No; and I wouldn't have you laugh incessantly and without cause. There isn't any sunshine in that sort of cheerfulness. It's only a tawdry imitation, like red paper and a candle in a scenic fireplace. But I do want you to cultivate a little real sunshine in the house, the kind that will warm and comfort and bless. Don't grumble, don't lament, don't hunt industriously for all the pricks in your rose garden. Look out for a little of the brightness and perfume. Ah, my dear, you may coin a mint of gold dollars and win only wretchedness, but the girl who coins bright words and cheery smiles, who scatters sunshine and loving service, she is to be envied above queens, for she will apply the balm more quickly to sorrow and heartache, than all the gold dollars in the land."

Annie only shook her head sadly. "I can't be a nightingale if I'm born a crow, Miss Polly. We come of a despondent race. I can't help it. I was born so."

"Nonsense! A tangle of weeds may be changed to a bed of mignonette. But you must first root out your weeds. Get rid of the old stock, the tears and sighs and frowns; and plant the new seeds, the smiles and cheery words. Pretty soon there will be whole acres of blossoms and butterflies where your burrs have been.

Try it, Annie. Think about it. Begin to-morrow—now! Good-night. I ran over for only a minute”—and she kissed the girl's hot cheek. “You will find that sunshine-making is blessed business.”

Annie sat very still for half an hour after Miss Polly's departure. “I will begin it to-morrow,” she said; and she undressed for bed with unusual briskness.

Mr. MacGregor sat as usual toasting his feet by the sitting-room fire when Annie ran down in the morning. She couldn't help recalling Miss Polly's words, “Scene, the sitting room; time, seven o'clock of a rainy morning,” and she glanced with almost a laugh at the gray square of window against which the rain trickled dimly.

“And how is the father to-day?” she asked brightly. “You will be picking up soon, father dear, now that spring is coming. Isn't this a day to make the violets grow?”

The father looked up curiously, and his face seemed to have quite lost the weary look for a moment. “I hadn't thought of the violets, daughter,” he said. “I was only wondering how drenched the morning paper might be.”

“The news will not be dry anyhow,” Annie said, as she ran along the hall to the front porch.

"This isn't bad," she called, returning. "It will dry out in a minute," and she held the moist sheet before the crackling fire. "Father, have you noticed what a trustworthy youngster John is growing to be? Your illness has done that much good, anyway. He seems to feel an added responsibility, as if he were temporary head of the house, and he doesn't know what it is to leave the water pitchers or coal scuttles unfilled any more. Not that we can encourage you to stay sick as a means of cultivating the moral virtues of the family. You are to be out in a month, well and strong," and she laid a hand gently upon his gray hair.

"You are a cheerful prophet, Annie."

"And a true one—you wait and see. You haven't looked so like your old self in six months."

She spoke truly. Cheered unconsciously by her hopeful tone, he took the warm paper from her hand, and rattled it briskly as he settled back to read until breakfast time.

When grave-eyed little Mattie slipped noiselessly into the room, Annie drew her into the hall mysteriously. "Let us have a surprise for Cathie when she comes down to breakfast," she whispered; and the small girl's face brightened. "Here, slip on your rubbers, take the big um-

brella, and paddle down to the violet bed. I feel in my bones that this shower has opened a bud or two, and you shall gather them for Cathie's plate."

Mattie fairly skipped under the old umbrella, down the garden walk; it was so new to see Sister Annie smile like that, and so delightful to plan a surprise for somebody. She could hardly wait. Four wet and fragrant blossoms and as many gleaming leaves were held tight in her little fingers as she came smiling in, to be whisked speedily into the dining room by Annie, with whose help she arranged the dainty bunch and tied it with a wee ribbon.



When Mrs. MacGregor came down the stairs with lagging steps, two smiling faces met her.

"Come, mother dearie, breakfast is all ready, and Jane has made your favorite muffins. Father says he is really hungry; and he is looking much better this morning! Isn't it fine?"

Then a little of the shadow left Mrs. MacGregor's face. "Oh, Annie!" was all she said, but there were hopes and doubts all mingled in the tone.

"Oh, you needn't be skeptical," said Annie, drawing her mother's arm through her own. "Father needs just a little encouragement from the home brood, and he'll be a new man before he knows it. Doesn't that coffee smell good?"

Somehow, in spite of the pattering rain outside, it seemed very bright and sunny in the MacGregor dining room that morning. Annie's sunshine was warming its way to the clouded hearts of the family.

Sober John smiled a broad, contagious smile, which he tried in vain to suppress, when his father repeated Annie's good report of him. Baby Lewis caught the infection and gurgled contentedly; while Cathie went off to school almost gayly, stepping lightly through the drizzle, and whiffing the fragrance of her violets with a sigh of content.

Annie went about her housework with new-born energy, singing as she aired the beds, smoothed the covers, and swept and dusted the rooms. "I declare, mother," she called once, laughing, "this old gray wall in the parlor is prettier than the prettiest paper we could find.

Every picture shows to full advantage against it. There are tones in it to make an artist rave, tones like a soft twilight or the breast of a dove. I am glad we haven't money to tempt us to spoil it with a lot of shiny newness."

"What has come over you, Annie?" the mother asked. "Yesterday it gave me a heart-ache just to look at you, with your face so sad and so lined with care and worry. But to-day——"

"To-day I am pulling up weeds," said Annie, laughing rather tremulously. "Don't ask me now, mother. I am a crazy gardener, perhaps; but the business is new to me, and I am not quite sure of myself."

The wise mother looked thoughtful over her sewing. "I think I shall like the crop, dearie," was all she said.

Indeed the weed-pulling went on in a way that would have sent joy to Miss Polly's heart.

Day after day Annie tried her best to change the burrs to blossoms—not always successfully, for she found it true that the ugly roots could not be turned into flowers and fragrance all at once. There were dark days when patience nearly failed her, and safety lay only in an inglorious retreat to her own room. There, if she dropped a few shining tears, she found the help and comfort she needed, and went back to her

endeavor with the renewed strength that comes to them "that wait upon the Lord."

It was a cool, sweet night in May when Miss Polly dropped in upon the circle sitting about the lamplight in the MacGregor sitting room.

"How cozy you look!" she exclaimed warmly. "I heard old Joe, the house-cleaner, remark to-day in his slow drawl that, 'Dey ain't no fambly in dis town so happy and cheerful-spirited as dem MacGregors.'"

"Yet, it's funny," said John in a puzzled way; "not two months ago we were all in the dumps, from father down to Lewis——"

"And life didn't seem to be worth living," finished Cathie.

"I think," said the father, "that I know the pioneer who first started to find the way through the clouds, and who made it easy for us to follow," and he turned toward Annie, his eyes shining with pride and fondness.

"Father dear!" exclaimed Annie, and then something choked her throat, so that she could only hold tight to his loving hand while glad tears welled to her eyes.

"Didn't I say you would find sunshine-making blessed business?" whispered Miss Polly as she took her leave.

XXIII

EDITH'S BETTER WAY

PROFESSOR MEYER tapped his baton with nervous quickness and the tiers of singers arose. Every eye was upon the small stick waving with rhythmical sweeps about the head of the emaciated little man. Then as one voice, the quiet melody sounded. It was the music of "The Lost Chord," and growing fuller and stronger, it swept like a great, cold wave over the audience until, full of faith and longing, it ended in the climax so rich, so sweet, so organ-like,

In heaven I shall hear that great Amen.

There was an instant's deathlike stillness, and then the applause broke forth in a storm that reverberated to the great, arched ceiling.

"You deserve much of the credit," whispered a smiling little woman to pretty Mrs. Farley Fairfax. "The poor old professor never could have managed us if you hadn't trained us first."

Mrs. Fairfax, smiling, motioned her friend to silence, for the professor was standing there in the blaze of the footlights, his hand uplifted.

"Dear frients," he said, "I haf no vords to t'ank you, yet I vant to t'ank you from mein heart. You haf all help me. You haf been so goot. For myself, for my vife, for my little one, I t'ank you. Andt Gott bless you, effery one."

The voice had trembled pitifully, and there were tears in the gray eyes so sunken in the long, pale face, as the professor stepped back; but he smiled again with grateful happiness when the people applauded long and loud as the curtain fell.

"It was a splendid success, professor," said the second violinist; then he caught the professor's arm hastily. "Lean on me, sir. You're a bit done up," and he motioned the crowd back and fanned the panting man with a sheet of music.

"Dear, dear," sighed Edith Fairfax. "Oh, poor man! It makes me positively weak to look at him. How pitiful it is; what a dreadful case!"

"Nothing but nervous excitement has kept him up all this evening," said Katharine Garver. "There, he is better now—smiling, though he breathes so painfully. Oh, Mr. Jackson, how much?" and she caught the sleeve of a little

man just bustling upon the stage, whose round face beamed with satisfaction.

"Four-hundred-dollar house, Miss Kathie," he said. "We'll clear three hundred for him above all expenses," and "the box-office" pushed his way on to Professor Meyer.

"It will bury him nicely," said Katharine to Edith on the way home, "and leave enough _____"

"Hush, Katharine! How can you talk in that cold-blooded way? You make me feel as if the poor creature had been acting as musical director at his own funeral."

"Well, my dear," said Katharine, "his own funeral is a thing he considers very cheerfully himself. He says he wants to be buried as cheaply as possible to leave all he can for his family. They are to go back to Mannheim, you know."

"And the doctors have said he may die at any minute," said Edith, shivering at the gruesome thought. "We call him old, Kathie, yet that is only because he is so worn out with care and illness. Forty is young to die. Why, papa is forty—my dear, young, jolly, bright papa——" and her voice broke.

"Well, Edith, get it off your mind. There is nothing more to be done, you know. You made

your old fiddle talk, and you sang like a bird; let that comfort you." Then, raising her voice, Katharine called to the little lady ahead: "Mrs. Fairfax, your chorus was best of all. It made me creep all up and down my spine."

"It was wonderful, Mamma Fairfax," said Edith. "You always make a success of whatever you attempt," and she gave a rapturous squeeze of the silken arm under the long wrap. "Professor Meyer said: 'Dot Schumann Club, it wass my strong right arm.'"

"The club has new life since you became its president," Katharine added.

Then the little party said good-night upon the Garver threshold.

For days thereafter Edith Fairfax picked up the daily papers with a certain fear and reluctance, each time expecting to read of the death of the poor, doomed violinist. She thought often of his eager joy a year before, when Frau Meyer and the baby came over from old Germany. He was like a boy in his rapture, and like a knight in his chivalrous tenderness toward the mild-eyed little woman and the child.

"Ach," he had cried, "only my body haf been in America these long months. My heart wass back in Mannheim mit Betta. Now you will hear me play mit heart and soul."

So he had played, giving his talent generously to churches and clubs, grateful for the few pupils he received and the few chances to earn odd dollars directing the Bridgeton orchestra when occasional professional troupes appeared.

Then came the long illness from which he had rallied to find his lungs weak, his pulse unsteady, and his purse, alas ! as thin as himself.

"*Schadet nichts*, Betta," he would say in those days ; "better times will come," and plunge into work with renewed energy.

It was a dark day when ruddy old Dr. Flower told him the end was near, and his death but a question of a few weeks. He had frowned at first, the poor violinist, as if he could not understand, and then had crept off home through the gray twilight, to break the news as best he could to Betta. To cheer her, to provide for her comfort, and earn her passage back to the poor old folks beyond the sea—that became his one thought, his constant struggle.

Then a homely old cornetist in the orchestra, in compassion for the weary man struggling against such odds, had suggested a benefit concert.

That over, the professor with the three hundred dollars all his own, wanted but one thing, to die quickly, before the expense of his own living had drawn upon the precious possession.

Yet Edith Fairfax looked in vain day after day for that death notice.

Weeks passed, and months, and in the excitement of the holidays, the skating and sleighing seasons, the girl well-nigh forgot Professor Meyer and his pitiful condition. Now March had come, March with its raw winds and rain. Mrs. Fairfax was away, and Edith and Katharine held high carnival in her absence, to lessen a little the loss of her bright presence in the house.

"We will practise duets and make candy," said Edith.

"And we will wax hilarious over our trigonometry and civil government," added Katharine with a wry face.

They were deep in the latter one blustering night when Mr. Fairfax came in smiling and waving the evening paper above his head.

"Read this," he said, pointing to a dispatch, and Edith read excitedly :

CHICAGO, March 18.—At the Convention of Musical-Literary Clubs, now in progress in this city, Mrs. Farley Fairfax, of Bridgeton, was to-day elected president of the State organization.

"Hurrah for the mamma!" cried the girl.
"How proud the Schumann Club will be that

their president, their delegate, has received this high honor ! Why, papa, that is something to be really proud of, among so many brilliant people, so many fine musicians. Oh, oh !” and the speech ended incoherently as Edith danced delightedly about the room.

The Schumann Club was hardly less enthusiastic when at its meeting in the club room next day, it sat talking over the action of the convention of music lovers in Chicago.

Mrs. Fairfax was not only the leading spirit of the club in Bridgeton, but a member whom her fellow-members loved with a very abandon of devotion. Pretty, gracious, and daintily refined, she was at the same time unassuming and tactful, a loyal friend, a womanly woman, and a bright and energetic executive officer.

“We can’t drive her through the streets in a chariot of gold,” said Mrs. Locke, the vice-president, who occupied the chair.

“But I know what we can do,” exclaimed an animated young person on a front seat. “We can give her a beautiful banquet at ‘The Burnham,’ and show her that we are sensible of the honor she is to us and the town.”

Instantly a murmur of voices arose that drowned the noise of the gavel, until the chairman, giving up the unequal contest, descended

from the platform and was lost, a magpie among magpies.

How they chattered and planned! There should be covers for fifty—just the musical people—roses for decoration—her favorite flower—Hamlin's orchestra, and the "Burnham" caterer.

It was all talked over, and the meeting had adjourned, when Edith and Katharine, on their way home from school, heard the happy news.

"How lovely, lovely, lovely!" exclaimed Edith, her eyes dancing. "How pleased mamma will be! But these dreadful hard times—how can they do it?"

"Easily," came the quick reply. "The whole thing will cost but two hundred dollars, and it will be the most willing expense the Schumann Club ever met. But Edith, you are passing your corner. Good-bye until seven. I'll be over then."

Edith stood in a daze. Then she turned with a little laugh. In her pleasure and excitement she would have forgotten, but for Katharine, her errand down this obscure street.

She had just learned that Professor Meyer wished to sell his old music, of which he had quantities.

"Let me see," she meditated, "I will get Gounod's 'Cradle Song,' for violin and piano, if

he still has it, that beautiful minuet of Mozart's from the 'Sixth Grand Symphony,' and Tartini's 'Larghetto,' " and hurrying along she presently reached the shabby cottage and knocked upon its door.

A faint, "*Herein*," answered her.

Stepping in, she did not at first see the figure rising painfully from a couch in the corner. Then she gave a great start, for it was the mere wreck of a man who stood before her, pale, thin, trembling, and gasping for every breath he drew.

"How do you do?" she stammered, and thought how like mockery the old, conventional greeting sounded.

But the man, between his strangling gasps for breath, answered her with piteous cheerfulness, "Much better to-day, I t'ank you, Miss Edit'. De vife und leetle one iss oudt at market. But sit you down——"

A fit of coughing interrupted him, and he sank upon the lounge. When he could speak again, it was to thank her for coming to buy the music.

"I haf very much. If I could sell, it would help. Oh, dot iss my terrible grief in de midst of so many blessings, dot de money iss going und I cannot die."

There were tears in the sad eyes, and a flush

on the thin cheek. "Why do I live? Why do I hang on, a burden, an expense, taking de bread from de mout' of my poor Betta? There iss now not enough to bury me und sent my dear ones home," and a choking sob ended in another fit of coughing.

Then he said unsteadily: "Forgif me. I distress you. It wass without thought I did it. I



haf much to t'ank Gott for. De music iss here in de chest; we will look it ofer."

"Now you just sit where you are," said Edith firmly. "I will look over the music," and she bent over the old chest with eyes that were blurred with tears.

Half an hour later she was speeding through the twilight to Dr. Flower's office.

The doctor sat in his comfortable reception

room leaning back in his great leathern chair, but he straightened with amazement when Edith whisked in.

"Dr. Flower," she demanded earnestly, "are doctors ever mistaken? Are you sure of Herr Meyer's case? Why does he live and live, when you gave him up months ago?"

"The man has wonderful vitality," said the doctor thoughtfully.

"Then how do you know he can't live after all, go on living for years?"

"I don't know it," said the doctor briefly. "As a matter of fact, if the man had half a chance, a change of scene and climate, freedom from worry—if he could go to Texas, for instance, or to Colorado—if he didn't struggle to his feet and try to give lessons when he ought to be in bed——"

"There might be hope?"

"Yes; I really think there might. Most amazing vitality—yes."

Edith, departing as abruptly as she had come, hurried along the streets toward home. "If the man had half a chance"—poor old Herr Meyer!—"a change of scene and climate, freedom from worry——" The doctor's words rang over and over in her ears and would not be silenced, for all the while a new idea was dawn-

ing in her mind—a way to help, a way to give the poor violinist his chance.

“But, oh, I cannot do it!” she wailed. “Mamma, mamma! The beautiful banquet, the honor, columns in the newspapers, the roses, the music and toasts—why, it will be a royal tribute, something to remember always, my pretty mother. Besides, it isn’t my affair. It is their money. They wouldn’t listen to me. How would I dare dictate, or even suggest?”

Long the battle raged in the girl’s heart, and it was midnight when Katharine was startled in her sleep by the rousing words, “I will do it if it scares me to death. You would tell me to, mother dearie, if you were here.”

Edith was sitting bolt upright, a white and determined little figure among the soft coverings.

“What’re you doin’?” murmured Katharine sleepily. “Tryin’ private theatricals? Chilly time, isn’t it?”

Edith, tucking the blankets around her, laughed and lay down again to sleep.

The Schumann Club held a busy meeting next day. The buzz of voices was at its highest when Edith Fairfax, with face white and hands cold, walked in and asked Mrs. Locke if she might speak, and then stepped to the platform.

"Ladies," she began uncertainly, "I have come here to ask you to do the most beautiful thing you can for my mother, something more beautiful than even a banquet, with roses and music and delicious things to eat, something that will honor her more, and be a thing she will remember with gladness as long as she lives. Instead of spending money for something that will be over and gone in a few hours, I want to beg you, for her sake, to spend it in saving a life, the life of a poor, brave violinist."

Then with tone more confident, though it trembled with tears, she told of the German professor, his pitiful condition, his cheerfulness and endurance, his love and sorrow for his wife and baby, and the hope Dr. Flower had given for his life.

"Can we, can we," she cried, "eat and laugh and make merry with the money that might bring him health and strength and years of life and happiness with his good wife and poor little baby? Wouldn't we feel that we had made her a widow and her child an orphan? Oh, please think of it—please——"

But the girlish voice broke, and the girlish figure rushed in confusion from the platform and was caught to the motherly heart of good Mrs. Locke.

There was a deal of coughing in the room for a minute, and some choking and clearing of throats. Perhaps that was why no one heard the soft step of a little woman who came forward from the great hall door and took the crying girl in her arms.

"My own precious daughter," the little woman said; but whatever else she said was lost in such a flutter of wet-eyed women, and such a chatter of happy voices, that it was more like a meeting of bluebirds in an April shower than of a body of well-regulated club members.

Nevertheless the flutter and the chatter kept on until every old plan of the Schumann Club had been killed and forgotten, and the new plans rose like Easter lilies, sweet and white, and full of the promise of hope and life.

The most flattering account of the most elaborate banquet ever given could not have been read with the joy and pride Mrs. Fairfax and Edith found in this small item clipped from a June number of the "Bridgeton Morning News":

Our people will be glad to know that Professor Meyer, late leader of the Bridgeton orchestra, is rapidly regaining his health in the salubrious climate of Colorado. He is so improved as to

be able to resume his teaching, and to take long walks daily.

The professor himself, a well and happy man, never tires, as the years go on, of telling little Franz on his knee the story of Edith Fairfax and the Schumann Club, of Bridgeton.

"And did you pay de monies back, fat'er?" the small boy always asks.

"With interest, both in dollars and heart's love, *mein Liebchen*," says the professor, at which little Franz chirrup his content and smiles happily at his mother smiling in return.

